

28 March 2008

Ms. Sharon Kennard  
Project Officer  
Allen Consulting Group  
GPO Box 418  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Ms. Kennard

## **SUBMISSION BY DEAFACCESS TO THE REVIEW OF THE DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

deaf access is pleased to make a submission to this important review. We are a Victorian regional service that was set up by DHS to 1. Help community organisations and services to work more effectively with deaf and hard of hearing people. 2. Raise awareness in the local community about the issues and needs of deaf and hard of hearing people. 3. Provide information relating to deafness or hearing loss to: deaf and hard of hearing people; their families or carers; as well as to agencies that provide services to deaf or hard of hearing people; and to the general community.

We have been operating over the last eight years and have a very strong base of understanding of issues from the community, expertise in the planning of, and advocating for, quality services for Deaf and hard of hearing community members throughout Victoria.

### **Signage/Communication on Public Transport**

We consider the needs of people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing have not received appropriate recognition under the current standards, particularly in the area of access to information.

We recommend that:

- ♣ Signage and communication for public transport should always include a clear visual display of all public service announcements such as cancellations and time tables.
- ♣ Emergency announcements such as evacuations need to have visual displays in all public areas including toilets, lounges, and food outlets.
- ♣ Audio information systems have been introduced in some systems in recognition of the need to provide information for travelers with vision impairment and the revised APTS must mandate the audio provision of all information other than maps. However these audio systems must be of a quality to be accessed by people with a hearing impairment. Loop systems should be provided where able.

### **Access to appropriate services by public transport**

- Children with disabilities in rural areas require bus transport to the nearest appropriate school and not the nearest school.
- Hearing impaired/deaf children have been bussed to the nearest mainstream local school but not to the local deaf school further away. Deaf children have been asked to attend closer special schools rather than Deaf facilities further away. This is not acceptable.

### **Access to Taxis.**

- ♣ We believe that drivers need to have training when working with people with complex communication needs.
- ♣ All taxis should have access to white boards and or symbol systems to assist a deaf or hard of hearing person to communicate their destination and needs.

### **Cost of public transport**

- ♣ The majority of people who are Deaf are on low incomes and/or are recipients of pensions/benefits. The Sunday Saver fare in Victoria could be extended to Saturday and a trial for one-two week days be considered. Country and residents with a disability face even greater transport disadvantage due to cost. We recommend a review of the cost of country transport.
- ♣ Many families that travel to Melbourne from regional areas for the repeated check ups and adjustments to cochlear ear implants for their toddlers and young children, face considerable expense with transport costs. We feel that a special family concessions on regional rail as well as metropolitan transport would assist .
- ♣ At present all seniors in Victoria, irrespective of income receive one free country trip per year on public transport. We recommend that people on pension, which includes many hearing impaired and Deaf people, or those receiving the New Start Benefit have access to up to four free trips per year. This recommendation is in line with the principles of the State Government's Fairer Victoria and the recently announced Social Inclusion Agenda of the Federal Government.

Hoping you consider our submission to your review. Please contact us if you have any queries regarding our submission.

Yours sincerely,

Erica Smith  
On behalf of deafaccess Victoria

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**daV** fulfils its goals by:

- Helping community organisations and services to work more effectively with deaf and hard of hearing people.
- Raising awareness in the local community about the issues and needs of deaf and hard of hearing people.
- Providing information relating to deafness or hearing loss to: deaf and hard of hearing people; their families or carers; as well as to agencies that provide services to deaf or hard of hearing people; and to the general community.