

Auslan Campaign Update

Parent Council for Deaf Education, NSW Association of the Deaf and the Deaf Society of NSW have been working together over the past eight months to lobby the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) for benchmarks for Auslan skills. Many existing Teachers of the Deaf (ToD) and teachers being trained do not have and are not working towards a minimum level of Auslan proficiency. The DET does not have a formal policy dictating qualification levels of Auslan for their (ToD) or Learning Support Officers.

Parents have provided feedback about their concerns for their deaf child's education, in regard to the inconsistencies of support and resources in the public system for their child using Auslan in NSW public schools.

For your information, see below a timeline of activities and actions that have taken place over the past eight months. If you would like to know more about this issue and the campaign or would like to assist in any way, please do not hesitate to contact Kate Kennedy at pcde@bigpond.com or Sheena Walters and Kate Nelson at the Deaf Society of NSW.

November 2008

- Representatives from above organisations met with DET Disability Programs Directorate, and were asked to put our issues in writing.
- Letter sent to DET Disabilities Program Directorate. Another meeting requested.

January 2008

- Letter sent to NSW Institute of Teachers.

February 2009

- Letter sent to Honourable Verity Firth, Minister for Education and Training informing her of the issues and asking for her attendance at upcoming meeting with the DET.
- Letter received from above. Unable to attend. Referred our concerns to DET.

March 2009

- Met with Marie Ficarra, Senator in the Upper House, to highlight the issue and gain support.
- Questions relating to the status of deaf education in NSW were asked by Senator Ficarra in Parliament to the Minister of Education.
- Met with DET Disabilities Program Directorate, and gained agreement from them to look at the critical issues in deaf education. A workshop planned for May to involve key stakeholders to brainstorm these issues.

April 2009

- Met with Adrian Piccoli, NSW Shadow Minister for Education to highlight the issues and gain support. He suggested we work on a policy submission to reflect the needs of deaf students in NSW.
- Answers tabled on 11 April in NSW Parliament to questions asked about the status of deaf education. These answers can be viewed on www.pcde.org.
- Met with DET to determine workshop parameters and proposed invitees. Agreed upon an independent facilitator to run upcoming workshop. Date still to be determined.

May 2009

- Deaf Society employed a staff member for a number of hours for research purposes to support the campaign.
- Meeting on 18 May with independent facilitator to finalise the plan for workshop and attendees list.
- Met with Renwick College to gain insight and information on status of training of ToD and deaf education in general.
- Deaf Society made contact with Helen Westwood, Labour MP and backbencher, who has an interest in deaf education. Meeting scheduled to work together to raise deaf awareness in parliament as part of National Week of Deaf People.

June 2009

- Date set for workshop of stakeholders and parents - 25 June, 2009. ■