



**Media Release**

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## **DEAF PEOPLE TO BE WORSE OFF FROM ABBOTT BUDGET**

Deaf people are the silent losers in the recently announced 2014/2015 federal budget, with the news that the position of Disability Discrimination Commissioner will be abolished when current Commissioner Graeme Innes steps down in July.

“This will have serious implications for deaf people,” said Deaf Australia CEO Kyle Miers, “Deaf people will already be disadvantaged in many ways, if this budget goes ahead, and now we have even less options available to us in the constant struggle for fairness in our everyday lives.”

“From the outset, it seems that the Abbott Government is washing its hands of the National Disability Strategy, forcing state governments to try to pick up the slack to ensure disabled people’s rights are protected,” he said.

Deaf Australia also has serious reservations about other budget areas, including the possible privatisation of Australian Hearing, the organisation responsible for audiology testing and hearing aid provision for deaf and hard of hearing people, and the six-month wait for Newstart recipients under the age of 30.

“Deaf people regularly experience discrimination in finding and maintaining meaningful employment,” explains Mr Miers, “and are much less likely to be able to pick up a new job in a short period of time compared to other people with similar skills. The prospect of losing their home or not being able to afford food and bills during the six-month wait will compound an already significant disadvantage.”

Due to education reforms, deaf and hard of hearing people cannot access full communication support (e.g. interpreters, notetakers, captioning) for a full tertiary course. In schools, with the federal government scaling back Gonski and education responsibility, deaf children will fall through the gaps, and there is no guarantee that state governments will address these issues.

Lack of education support and incentives for employers to hire deaf workers means deaf people continue to struggle to access opportunities in a competitive workforce, leaving them further behind.

“Deaf people on a Disability Support Pension because employers and educational institutions won’t give them a fair go are already struggling,” explained Mr Miers, “By reducing and threatening the DSP, Abbott is ensuring they will be worse off than anyone.”

**\*Ends\***

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