



Media Release

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POSSIBLE PRIVATISATION OF AUSTRALIAN HEARING CONCERNING FOR DEAF GROUPS

Deaf Australia has serious reservations about the proposal to privatise Australian Hearing in the Abbott Government's Budget announcement this week.

Privatising Australian Hearing creates potential for unregulated services for families who have deaf children: creating unnecessary difficulty and stress.

"Australian Hearing is an essential service for deaf people and their families," said Deaf Australia CEO Mr Kyle Miers, "They conduct newborn baby audiology tests, as well as both childhood and adult audiology and hearing aid services."

People up to 25 years of age, and deaf people on a Disability Support Pension (DSP) or who are retired are eligible to access the Australian Government's Australian Hearing service.

Standard private health insurance has extensive waiting periods for hearing aids and audiology services, and out of pocket expenses are often excessive. Private health insurance premiums are relatively expensive leading to many deaf people being unable to afford to have insurance.

Deaf Australia is waiting to find out if the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will fund hearing aids as part of the scheme at any point of deaf person's life, as well as sign language based communication support.

Should Australian Hearing be fully privatised by the next federal election (2016), families who have a deaf child need assurance that they will be supported until the full roll out of NDIS, due in 2018.

Deaf Australia is calling for:

- Continuing support and commitment for deaf people who are on DSP or retired to ensure that they continue to receive support after privatisation of Australian Hearing
- Hearing aid and Auslan services be offered as part of the NDIS for every deaf person and their family
- Insurance companies to reduce mandatory waiting periods for hearing aids
- Private providers to be regulated to ensure that families are not exploited and caused undue burden and financial hardships
- Government to continue support for families of a newborn deaf child to receive hearing aid and relevant support during the transition to the NDIS.

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