

21 June 2005

The Hon Kevin Andrews
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

Re: Auslan Interpreting in employment situations

You may recall that at our meeting with you in June last year, Mr Andrew Wiltshire and I raised many issues related to employment for people who are Deaf and who use Auslan as their primary language. One of the issues we raised was the need for Auslan interpreters to be available in specific employment situations.

We explained that Deaf people do not need interpreters on the job full time, they only need them in some situations, such as job interviews, training and professional development, staff meetings etc. We also discussed some of the problems related to the provision of Auslan interpreters in employment situations. These problems include shortage of qualified interpreters, the skill levels of interpreters, cost, and refusal by training providers and employers (including government at all levels) to accept responsibility for providing interpreters.

Since our meeting with you, there has been ongoing discussion about employment issues in many different forums. One of the possible solutions suggested for the problem of cost of provision of interpreters has been the inclusion of Auslan interpreting in the Workplace Modifications Scheme as an allowable workplace modification, and for eligibility to be extended to all new and ongoing employees with a disability.

It has come to our attention that your Department is currently reviewing the Workplace Modifications Scheme, but that Auslan interpreting is not being considered for inclusion. If this is the case, could you please advise why it will not be included?

I understand that you may have other ideas for how to address this issue, and we would be most happy to discuss other solutions with you. However, in the meantime we would urge you to include Auslan interpreting in the Workplace Modifications Scheme and to extend the eligibility to all Deaf employees.

We would be happy to discuss this further with you. I can be contacted by email at karen.lloyd@aad.org.au

Yours sincerely,

Karen Lloyd
Manager