



Deaf Australia Inc.

Media Release
For immediate release

2 October 2012

GOVERNMENT SAYS NO TO '000' SERVICE FOR DEAF AUSTRALIANS

"Lives will be lost because of the Gillard Government's decision to ignore deaf Australians and not provide them with easy access to the '000' service through an emergency SMS service," said Deaf Australia President Ann Darwin today.

Despite the organisation drawing this matter to the attention of governments for the past ten years, the Gillard Government has failed to include access to essential mobile emergency services under their current National Relay Service (NRS) tender.

Although the National Relay Service has been successfully helping deaf people communicate with hearing people by phone and now internet for 17 years, this tender misses the opportunity to include technology upgrades that are long overdue.

Ms Darwin said this decision means that while deaf people can contact road side assistance on their mobile to get a flat tyre changed, they can't use their mobile to call police, ambulance or fire services.

Mrs Darwin said, "This omission is literally a matter of life and death for deaf Australians and treats deaf people as second class citizens. It's also contradictory to a commitment given by Communications Minister Stephen Conroy in April 2010 and is a breach of UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability guaranteeing the right of safety.

"This decision means a deaf person has to rely on a hearing person calling '000' for them or hope they are home and can use outdated TTY services.

"Australians will understand the precarious position this puts the deaf community in when they are outside of their home and in need of emergency assistance.

"I think the Australian community as a whole expects better from its Government and I call on the Gillard Government to review this decision prior to the tender co-sign on October 10," said Mrs Darwin.

Deaf Australia is the national peak organisation for Deaf people in Australia. It represents the views of deaf people who use Auslan and is a true consumer organisation as only deaf people have the right to vote on Deaf Australia business and to be elected to the Board. Deaf Australia's vision is that deaf people are respected and fully included in the Australian community and the right to use Auslan is legally recognised.

ENDS

Media Contact
Amber Venner
Communication Republic
Phone 0402 443 603
amber@communicationrepublic.com.au

Deaf Australia Contact
Karen Lloyd AM, Executive Officer
Deaf Australia Inc.
TTY: 07 3357 8277
Fax: 07 3357 8377
karen.lloyd@deafau.org.au
www.deafau.org.au