



Telecommunications in the Workplace for Deaf People Discussion Paper

Preliminary



What is a Discussion Paper?

A discussion paper is a document that is sent to the Deaf community, for you to read and think about things that are in this Discussion Paper. At the end of the Discussion Paper, there is a separate page/attachment with all the questions in the document, ready for you to fill out and send to AAD. Information on how to send to AAD is on the last page of this document.

When we receive all the replies from you, we will put together all the details and it will show us what you all feel and think about the questions we are asking you. This helps us to show to the people who provide services & telecommunications and those who work in the telecommunications industry, industry regulators or Government Departments what the Deaf community feels. It is always important to be able to show what the Deaf community really feels by having some real facts. Your feedback will be very important to us!

We look forward to knowing how you all feel about the issues in this Discussion paper so that our knowledge about access and equity in the telecommunications area can be kept up to date.

The information we receive from you will be protected under the Privacy Act and cannot be used by anyone else outside AAD.

What is DTAN?

This project builds on the work done by AAD's Telecommunications Access Subcommittee (TASC) since 1986. The project has been operating with funding from the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) since October 2001.

Activities of the project for 2003-2004

- National community consultation with the Deaf Community
- Publish 2 articles/research reports aimed at Government, industry and regulators
- Disseminate 3 discussion papers aimed at the Deaf Community
- AAD representation at various telecommunications committees and forums
- Collaborate with other peak disability groups to increase telecommunications access
- Lobby for equitable access to telecommunications products and services for the Deaf community

This project is exciting for AAD as more time and energy can be devoted to ensuring we are able to disseminate information and lobby stakeholders for increased access to telecommunications.

Why is this paper about Telecommunications for Deaf People in the Workplace?

This discussion paper is the preliminary part of a discussion paper that AAD is planning to do this year. This preliminary part of the discussion paper is aimed at Deaf people. Its purpose is to find out from you what happens for you with telecommunications when you are looking for a job and when you have a job. When we have feedback from you, we will prepare a discussion paper that looks at what is happening for Deaf people in the workplace as a whole (not just telecommunications).

The second paper will be aimed at everybody – Deaf people, employers, employment services, government. It will look at a range of issues related to employment for Deaf people – eg provision of interpreters, how helpful employment services are, reasonable adjustments in the workplace, as well as telecommunications. AAD is interested to improve employment opportunities and workplace conditions for Deaf people.

For this preliminary paper, Australian Association of the Deaf is very interested in making sure that our Deaf members or Deaf people are able to look for work equally as our hearing peers. There is not enough information available about how Deaf people access telecommunications when looking for a job or when they are working. This preliminary discussion paper will hopefully find out what work needs to be done in making sure access is available to all Deaf people.

In 2004, Deaf people still do not have the same access to employment or in the workplace as our hearing peers. Some agencies and employers provide more access than others and we want to find out which areas should improve.

We felt it was important to start discussion about whether Deaf people currently get equal access to telecommunications when they are looking for a job or when you are already working.

This discussion paper is divided into three different sections.

Section 1 – Looking for Work

This covers Deaf people who are currently looking for work through the Job Network, Deaf specialized Employment Agencies or Recruitment Agencies.

Section 2 – Getting the Job

This covers the time during your jobsearch, especially when you have an employer or the agency asking you about your job application and/or to inform you that you have an interview. This is a very important phase of your jobsearch and it is essential that they are able to contact you quickly. This section mentions the Workplace Modifications Scheme.

Section 3 – In the Workplace

This section explores how the employer is able to communicate with you and how you are able to communicate with your work colleagues or customers.

If you are looking for work or working, your comments are very valuable to us and will help us understand what issues there are in today's workplace. However, all Deaf people are welcome to complete the Discussion Paper.

If you need any further information or assistance, you can contact the DTAN project officer – Andrew Wiltshire on contact details on the last page.

Thank you

Before we go into the discussions, we would like you to tell us a little bit about yourself. This information will help us to see the different issues, in terms of male or female, age group and which State or Territory. We do not need you to give us your name or address.

Please look at the Questionnaire and complete the information about yourself.

SECTION 1 – LOOKING FOR WORK

There are lots of ways a person can look for work. Some people are referred to the Job Network if they are on certain Centrelink benefits, whereas some are referred to a Family and Community Services job search centre (Deaf Societies). Others may use a Recruitment agency or look for a change of career while still working.

When looking for work, it is always very important to be able to apply for jobs quickly because jobs come and go quite quickly these days.

A lot of positions that are advertised require you to contact them for information or application forms as well as background information to the position. Some positions require you to contact the company or a Job Network service provider to find out how you should apply.

Because of this, telecommunications play a very important role in your jobsearch and Deaf people can be disadvantaged if your service provider does not supply adequate telecommunications access or you are unable to use some of their telecommunications equipment such as the telephone without a TTY.

Telecommunications access refers to the use of a phone or a TTY, mobile phones, email and any other forms of telecommunications you use. This can include Instant Messenger (a bit like ICQ and MSN)

Please look at the Questionnaire and complete the information about your job search.

- 1.1. How do you normally look for work?
 - 1.2. How does your service provider contact you for an appointment or to let you know if there are suitable jobs for you?
 - 1.3. When looking for a job, some jobs need you to phone the employer before applying or you need to request an information pack on the position you wish to apply for. How do you normally do this?
 - 1.4. When you are at the employment agency, which telecommunications equipment are you able to use?
 - 1.5. AAD is interested to know what other telecommunications equipment you use to look for work that are not listed above. Can you tell us what they are and why they are good for you?
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Section 2 – Getting the Job

Most of the employment agencies will ensure that you are assisted during the selection process of your job application, for example, with job interviews and preparing you before you start your new job. There are wide variations in what employment agencies can offer you. This discussion paper relates to the telecommunications part of your employment journey.

In this section, we will be asking questions regarding the notification of your job interview, about how you are notified when you were successful in getting your job and preparation before you start on your first day with your new employer.

It is widely known that when a job is advertised, it attracts a wide range in number of applications received. Some jobs attract several hundred job applications and it is usually very important that they are able to contact you quickly to organize an interview or to discuss your application.

Generally the employment agencies are also supposed to be able to communicate with you quickly when required. Not all of them have TTYs. Are they able to contact you quickly when you are not at home? What if you have an interview in one hour's time? For that perfect job you have wanted to get!

Normally employers will want to hear from you during your interview about how you are able to participate in their workplace because you are Deaf. Some of them have never worked with Deaf people and they become concerned about workplace safety and communication issues. It is always helpful to know which telecommunications equipment and/or solutions are available to us, as a worker and also for the employer before he employs a Deaf employee. Technology changes fast and some employers come up with very interesting solutions for their Deaf employees. We hope you can tell us about any other technology that you use, that really helps you.

At the moment, Deaf people are able to access the Telstra or Optus Disability Equipment Program for equipment **at home** like TTYs etc. Is this enough? Should this Disability Equipment Program cover our workplace needs? We all, as individuals, have the right to use whatever technology is available to us to be able to communicate with our hearing peers in real time. But is it available to us?

Some people are able to access the Family and Community Services (FaCS) Workplace Modifications Scheme. There are several conditions and it is recommended that you visit their website and download their application forms and guidelines. This Workplace Modifications Scheme allows for someone who is with an employment agency to apply for equipment to help them adapt to their new workplace. Your employment agency should be able to help you with information about the scheme and help you with your application. Is this enough to cover your needs?

You can also look this up on the FaCS website. The address is:

http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/disability-workplace_modifications_scheme.htm

Please look at the Questionnaire and complete the information about getting the job.

- 2.1. When your employment agency or prospective employer needs to get in touch with you after you have sent your job application, how do they contact you?
- 2.2. When you have had your interview, how will you know that you have been successful in your job interview? Do you hear from the employer or from your agency?
- 2.3. As soon as you know you have got the job, does the employment agency give you or your employer information about workplace modifications scheme?

Section 3 – In the workplace

In today's modern workplace, everyone is required to participate equally and most government departments, large companies and global companies (especially those who are based in the USA) have an internal Equal Employment Opportunity policy.

Some businesses do more than others and some employ a diversity of people in the workplace. No one business is the same as the next. Some people may work in smaller firms or run their own businesses.

In every job you have in your lifetime, every workplace will be different in what telecommunications equipment you use to do your work well. For example, the telecommunications equipment that AAD has or uses in the workplace includes:

- TTY
- Fax
- National Relay Service
- SMS on mobiles
- Voice calls (hearing people leave messages and we use the NRS to listen to messages and return the calls)
- Email
- MSN Chat
- Video over Internet Protocol (VoIP)

One of the problems that we have is we are unable to communicate in real time (like a conversation face to face) when we are on the move. We are only able to use SMS when we are traveling (like going to the airport, going to work by car, train, bus etc)

Some employers have come up with innovative solutions to problems with telecommunications, for example PDA's (Personal Digital Assistant – sometimes called Palm Pilots) with inbuilt Instant Messenger and so on.

We would be interested to hear from you!

Please look at the Questionnaire and complete the information about your workplace.

- 3.1 How do you normally contact your employer if you are not at work? For example, if you are sick, your car broke down or you have missed the train/bus.
- 3.2 Which equipment do you have in your workplace to enable you to use telecommunications?
- 3.3 Did your employer or someone in the company talk to you about what telecommunication needs you may have in your workplace?
- 3.4 Are you happy with the range of telecommunications equipment available for you to do your work?
- 3.5 Was it easy for you to get any additional equipment (for example, a new TTY in your office, etc) from your employer?
- 3.6 What other telecommunications equipment do you think should be available for Deaf people who are working? Tell us why you think it is important.

If you have any other comments you wish to make about this Discussion Paper, we will be glad to hear from you.

Comments and feedback

AAD looks forward to your comments on this paper. As you can see it addresses many issues. We may have missed some, so please tell us your ideas, concerns and thoughts.

The deadline for feedback is Friday 30th July 2004

If you wish to provide feedback or ask questions, you can do one or all of the following:-

1. Fill out this form and fax to:

Andrew Wiltshire
Community Liaison and Projects Officer
Fax: 02 9871 8218

2. Fill out this form and post to (FREE POSTAGE):

Andrew Wiltshire
Community Liaison and Projects Officer
Australian Association of the Deaf Inc
Reply Paid 1083
STAFFORD
QLD 4053

3. Electronically complete the form and email to:

Andrew Wiltshire
Email: andrew.wiltshire@aad.org.au

4. Visit AAD's website, go into DTAN Discussion Site and type your comments on www.aad.org.au

Your feedback and comments are very important for us. It helps us to know what the Deaf community feels and to represent you fairly when we lobby for improved services or goods.

After receiving feedback from the community, we will share your comments with the government, telecommunications industry, mobile phone providers, community services, employees and the other members of the Deaf community as well as on our website.

Andrew Wiltshire
Community Liaison and Projects Officer