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Ms Helen Owens
Presiding Commissioner
Disability Discrimination Act Inquiry
Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2, Collins Street East
Melbourne 8003

Dear Ms Owens

Please find attached the Cora Barclay Centre's submission to the Inquiry into the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Naomi Higgs, parent of a child with a cochlear implant and President of Parents of Hearing Impaired South Australia; Claire Harris, parent of a child with a cochlear implant and I will attend the hearing on 4 July from 9am-9.45am

Yours sincerely

Dr Jill Duncan
Director

SUBMISSION

The Cora Barclay Centre is a non-government agency funded under the (Education) Non-Government Support Centre Programme and receives funding (on average) of \$5,171 for a school student requiring intensive and specific educational support of more than 20 hours per term, \$1,477 for a student requiring significant education support equivalent to 5-20 hours per term and \$740 per school student requiring additional specialist educational support equivalent to less than five hours per term. This funding level has a limited capacity to meet the increasing demands for services required and has resulted in the Cora Barclay Centre charging an administration fee (between \$90 and \$240 per year) as well as offering fee-for-service to families and schools (\$90 per hour).

The Cora Barclay Centre believes all children are entitled to receive a high quality education and that every child has an entitlement to a basic level of public funding and entitlement to support services in order to enhance their access to education, and choice of school, regardless of what school they attend.

Families with children who have a hearing disability in South Australia do not consistently have the opportunity to select the school of their choice. In many cases school communities and individual families are meeting the significant costs of services, essential to ensure access for students with disabilities to the school of their choice. These services include auditory-verbal therapy, speech pathology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and psychological assessments. Many parents consider that they are disadvantaged relative to their State government school counterparts in that they face fee-for-service charges for appropriate level of services. This has a significant impact on maximising the potential of children with a hearing disability and the associated stress of their families.

The Cora Barclay Centre believes that the associated costs of enhancing the ability of students with a hearing disability to attend the school of their choice should be borne more equitably by the whole community. This could be achieved by the Commonwealth and State Government funding, in regard to supporting the additional educational needs of students with disabilities being allocated at the same level regardless of the school sector. It is essential that there is a recognition by State and Commonwealth governments in providing adequate levels of public funding and access to a wide range of support services to meet the specific and in many cases significant additional costs associated with educating students with disabilities.

Enrolling a student with a hearing disability within a school is often challenging for individual families. Conflict of interest can occur between the school's social commitment to students with disabilities, cost of educating a student with a disability, the principal as well as the classroom teacher's responsibilities to all the students within the class and school.

Once a child is enrolled in a school, a number of issues often arise. These include tension between the educational obligation of the school communities and their inability to provide the resources (human and capital). Schools are often unable to provide adequately in-serviced teachers and specialist teacher support. It has been reported that parents of children without a disability often perceive that individual students with disabilities are receiving 'special' treatment to the detriment of their child. This places schools and their staff in an untenable situation.

It is the belief of many parents that until all school communities have access to a sufficient and sustainable level of resources in order to adequately support the needs of students with a hearing disability the schools will continue to have difficulties in meeting the objectives of the DDA legislation.

In closing, there is an additional concern in the lack of consistency in definitions of disability across State and Commonwealth Government legislation in regard to education.

Appendix

CORA BARCLAY CENTRE FOR THE DEAF AND HEARING IMPAIRED

BACKGROUND

The South Australian Oral School for Deaf Children, now known as the Cora Barclay Centre, was opened in 1945. It was established to teach hearing impaired children, predominantly victims of serious rubella epidemics in the early 1940's, to maximise their residual hearing and to communicate using oral methods. Although the Centre's name has changed, it's principles for teaching children with hearing impairment have remained the same.

The Cora Barclay Centre has received international recognition for providing best practice as evidenced through the following awards -

Best practice award, Australasian teleconferencing association	2001
Program of the year, Alexander Graham Bell association for the deaf, Washington, D.C.	1999
Professional of the year, international organisation of education of the deaf in affiliation with the Alexander Graham Bell association for the deaf, Washington, D.C.	1995

A large numbers of children with disabilities, their carers and their families benefit from the Cora Barclay Centre community support services. In the year 2001/2002, the Cora Barclay Centre provided an early intervention support service to 26 children with hearing impairment ages three months to six years, 143 school age children with hearing impairment ages 6-19 years in more than 110 schools, and 40 hearing children enrolled in the Centre's integrated kindergarten and parent infant groups.

EARLY INTERVENTION SUPPORT SERVICES

The Cora Barclay Centre Early Intervention Support Services provides a continuing and sustained service to young children with hearing impairment from diagnosis through to six years of age. Early intervention services includes specialist parent guidance, specialist auditory-verbal intervention, an integrated kindergarten program, early years transition program and a paediatric audiology program.

The Centre provides an "early years transition programs" for young children with hearing impairment as they move into primary schooling. These programs include intensive language teaching and classroom programs that reflect the early years (kindergarten and reception) curriculum. A continuum of support is available ranging from co-enrolment at the Cora Barclay Centre integrated kindergarten and in the non-government school of the family's choice. This program provides intensive school support when the child begins full-time schooling.

Specialist parent guidance support

The “parent guidance support program” supports the notion that parents are partners in the habilitation of their deaf child. Families undergo an informal educational process that facilitates the learning of all aspects of living with a child who is deaf or hearing impaired. The Centre provides “counselling” within the “parent guidance program” for those families that require additional support. A structured “parent-to-parent support program” exists that facilitates the opportunity for parents of newly identified children to communicate with and learn from parents of older deaf or hearing impaired children. The Centre provides case management and referral support services, as well as advocacy and advocacy training for individuals with a hearing impairment, their carers and their families. Counselling is offered for individuals with a hearing impairment, their carers and families on a needs basis.

Specialist auditory-verbal therapy

The “specialist auditory-verbal therapy” program facilitates speech-language-auditory-cognitive skills development. This is carried out through Centre-based or home-based intensive and individualised therapy. A natural developmental program is followed which mirrors the progress of normally hearing children. One of the key roles of the auditory-verbal therapist is to provide regular ongoing “diagnostic evaluations” of the child’s development and the parent’s ability to facilitate the learning process.

Integrated Playgroup and Kindergarten Programs

The “integrated parent infant group” is for children 1-3 years of age. A teacher of the deaf supports the program by providing information and modelling strategies to the parent infant group leader and parents in an effort to enhance the learning of the child with hearing impairment. The “integrated pre-entry program” is for children 3 - 4 years of age. This is a transition program for the children to become familiar with the routines and expectations of kindergarten through structured activities and group time. The Centre offers an “integrated kindergarten” for children 4-5 / 6 years of age. The purpose of this program is to structure a context in which specific goals and objectives can be attained for individual children. A “consultancy visiting therapy support service” is available for those children with hearing impairment who are fully integrated into their local preschool or kindergarten.

Early Intervention Services Philosophy

The specialist early intervention services operate within a wider framework of the inclusive early childhood services of the Centre. The services offer a range of activities and programs to support and promote young children’s learning and provide an exemplar model of inclusive early childhood practice. Programs are developed in response to the individual needs of children and families. Programs include specialist listening, language and speech teaching programs from teachers of the deaf, audiological management and support from an audiologist, and parent/family support activities from the multi-disciplinary team.

Early Intervention Services Outcomes

Anticipated outcomes for students receiving support from the Cora Barclay Centre early intervention services include a general improvement in the child’s ability to access the kindergarten curriculum as well as an improvement in social discourse participation within a peer-peer culture and home environment. Expected improvement is anticipated in the following specific areas: Measured improvement in auditory identification, auditory processing, auditory comprehension, auditory closure and auditory self-monitoring skills; Measured improvement in expressive and receptive pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, morphologic and phonologic skills; Measured improvement in phonetic and phonologic level speech including improvement in all suprasegmental aspects (pitch, duration and timing) as well as speech intelligibility.

THERAPY SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

The Cora Barclay Centre provides specialist individual support (one-to-one) for students who are deaf or hearing impaired in non-government schools. Support is provided to the classroom teacher and the school support officer; in-servicing to school staff members regarding hearing impairment; and ongoing observations of students with hearing impairment.

The Centre provides specialist auditory, speech, language, cognitive development facilitation and teaching. This includes ongoing diagnostic assessment and teaching from a qualified teacher of the deaf and/or auditory-verbal therapist. Intervention is either developmental or remedial in nature - depending on the needs of the student. The Centre also provides a “secondary schooling transition program” which support students ages 16 to 20 years entering tertiary education or employment. The program is implemented through specific intervention designed to facilitate the career pathway process.

The Centre offers a comprehensive and ongoing “audiological evaluation” that is aimed at maximising residual hearing. The Centre operates a “paediatric and educational cochlear implant program” including pre implant candidacy assessment and ongoing mapping. The Cora Barclay Centre has fully equipped audiological facilities. The audiologist is available for hearing assessment, minor hearing aid repairs, cochlear implant speech processor repairs and middle ear pathology monitoring. Cochlear implant candidacy evaluation and ongoing programming is provided on site.

The Cora Barclay Centre has a service agreement’ with the catholic education and independent school sectors to provide – school based specialist individual education support (one-to-one) for students who are deaf or hearing impaired.

However, it is well established that many school age children need Centre-based therapy support. These are children with a significant language and literacy delay.

Specialist Individual Therapy Support for School Age Children

The Centre provides an “early years transition programs” for young children with hearing impairment as they move into primary schooling. This program provides intensive school support when the child begins full-time schooling. The Centre provides specialist auditory, speech, language, cognitive development facilitation and teaching. This includes ongoing diagnostic assessment and teaching from a qualified teacher of the deaf and/or auditory-verbal therapist. Intervention is either developmental or remedial in nature - depending on the needs of the student. The Centre provides a “secondary schooling transition program” which support students ages 16 to 20 years entering tertiary education or employment. The program is implemented through specific intervention designed to facilitate the career pathway process. The Centre provides case management and referral support services, as well as advocacy and advocacy training for individuals with a hearing impairment, their carers and their families. Counselling is offered for individuals with a hearing impairment, their carers and families on a needs basis.

Specialist Support for the Classroom Teacher

The Cora Barclay Centre staff provides ongoing consultative support to the classroom teacher regarding the auditory, speech, language, and cognitive development of the student. The Cora

Barclay Centre staff also provides ongoing consultative support to the classroom teacher regarding the most appropriate intervention needed for a specific student to maximise access to the curriculum. The Cora Barclay Centre audiologist provides an acoustic check (reverberation) of classrooms in which the deaf or hearing-impaired child will learn. The multi-disciplinary staff of the Centre provides “school based” training and development workshops for teachers and school assistants to support the inclusion of a specific student with hearing impairment in to a specific school. The multi-disciplinary staff of the Centre provides “Centre based” training and development workshops for teachers, school assistants and other professionals to support the general philosophy of inclusion of students with hearing impairment. The “school based” and “Centre based” workshops are offered during the first term of each school year and throughout the academic year on a needs basis. The Cora Barclay Centre staff provides ongoing observation of the student, at the request of the teacher, in a peer culture social discourse context or academic context.

School Support Services Philosophy

Cora Barclay Centre school support services programs are developed in response to the individual needs of students, families, and school personnel. Long and short-term goals and objectives are designed to actively involve families and caregivers. The Cora Barclay Centre school support service aims to support the inclusion of students in non-government schools of the family’s choice. As each child has individual needs, a continuum of support is available ranging from one school visit per term to four school based visits per week.

School Support Services Outcomes

Anticipated outcomes for students receiving support from the Cora Barclay Centre include a general improvement in the child’s ability to access the curriculum as well as an improvement in social discourse participation within a peer-peer culture, academic and home environment. Expected improvement is anticipate in the following specific areas: Measured improvement in auditory identification, auditory processing, auditory comprehension, auditory closure and auditory self monitoring skills; Measured improvement in expressive and receptive pragmatic, semantics, syntactic, morphologic and phonologic skills; and Measured improvement in phonetic and phonologic level speech including improvement in all suprasegmental aspects (pitch, duration and timing) as well as speech intelligibility.

Measurements include a battery of formal assessments normed on hearing children and informal analysis based on criterion referenced norms. Individual schools may implement a ‘negotiated curriculum plan’ or an ‘individualised education plan’ which the Cora Barclay Centre staff will use in formulating goals, objectives and use to determine which assessments are appropriate.

PAEDIATRIC AUDIOLOGY SUPPORT SERVICES

The Centre offers a comprehensive and ongoing “audiological evaluation” that is aimed at maximising residual hearing. The Centre operates a “paediatric and educational cochlear implant program” including pre implant candidacy assessment and ongoing mapping. The Cora Barclay Centre has fully equipped audiological facilities. The audiologist is available for hearing assessment, minor hearing aid repairs and middle ear pathology monitoring. Cochlear implant candidacy evaluation and ongoing programming is provided on site. Audiology services works across early intervention services and school support services

The Cora Barclay Centre paediatric, educational audiologist provides the following services - Cochlear implant mapping; Research and service; Hearing aids, FMs & classroom acoustic checks

TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES

Training and development and research support services

The Cora Barclay Centre provides training and development to agencies in order that they might deliver higher quality of services that are more appropriate to children with a disability, their carers and families.

The Centre is also a member of the University of Melbourne corporative research Centre for hearing aid and cochlear implant innovations. The Centre provides data regarding measured outcomes to the University of Melbourne and in return, the University assists in maintaining state of the art audiological intervention and support for children with a disability, their carers and their families.

The Centre's multi-disciplinary staff provides training and development workshops for people working with children or students who are hearing impaired in order to deliver higher quality and services that are more appropriate and to promote service systems management. Training and development can be specific to the site and context. There are a number of factors that limit their capability to provide the necessary support for existing students with disabilities and further increase the number of these students in their school communities.