

Deafness Association of the Northern Territory Inc.

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Kim Gusberti
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Productivity Commission
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Dear Kim

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION ENQUIRY INTO THE COMMONWEALTH DDA

Thank you for your fax and I am detailing below anecdotal evidence of discrimination against a deaf person who has been trying to get a permanent job for the past seven years.

Danny Leong is our Signed English Class tutor: an extremely intelligent young man who went post-lingually deaf at the age of six through over prescription of antibiotics. I enclose an article on him from the magazine STEP BY STEP, the National Mental Health Education Project for Young Deaf People.

As Danny says, he has found it impossible to get a job because of his hearing loss. He wears two behind-the-ear aids which are obvious (these are for people with a severe hearing loss). With them he hears quite well: without them, he hears little. He has worked on a casual basis at the airport (where surely a hearing loss is an advantage) but they will not offer him a permanency. He is an extremely hard worker and has just got married: his wife is expecting a baby and he really needs permanent employment. His experience has shown him that if he submits a CV showing he was educated at a Primary and Secondary Deafness Unit he will not even be granted an interview for a job, despite the fact that he is computer literate and has passed Year 12 at school, so he has learnt to delete all references to the Units in his CV. When he does get an interview he is very conscious of the interviewer being put off by the sight of his hearing aids: he has even been told this. Even application to the local supermarkets as a shelf filler are not successful following an interview.

Danny is a quite brilliant Sign Language tutor. We run ten week Courses, with a certificate in proficiency at the end, and the comments made on his lessons are extremely complimentary (note: his pupils are mainly young teachers). He has a great sense of humour and presents very well.

This year he was entered by Quota International for the Young Achiever of the Year Award. Surely this means something, but even this does not get over the antipathy that many deaf people encounter. In Danny's case it is not a disability, either in his temporary job (he has been employed on a part-time basis for seven years – this speaks for itself) nor in his social life and teaching ability. This is just the sort of person who needs the protection the DDA might offer to those so sorely discriminated against.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Salter AM
President