

**PRODUCTIVITY  
COMMISSION  
REVIEW OF DDA**



**Submission to  
Productivity Commission Review of the DDA**

*14 MAY 2003*

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## **1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

The DDA has had limited success in achieving benefits for people who are discriminated against because of their hearing impairment or deafness. That is at least partially because people who are hearing impaired or Deaf have made inadequate use of the DDA.

Attachment A outlines the limited achievements derived from use of the DDA complaint mechanism so far, in terms of eliminating discrimination against people who are hearing impaired or Deaf. The use of the complaint mechanism has not been entirely without value. For example, there have been significant benefits in respect of captioning of movies and TV broadcasts. More has been achieved when complaints have been dealt with via a public inquiry process than by individual complaint resolution. There also has been very little achieved by way of cases taken to the courts.

The Deafness Forum has recently lodged representative DDA complaints against five hotels and made those complaints public - see media release at attachment B. It was hoped that this would lead to a public inquiry that, in turn, would result in major improvements to hearing access at all short-term accommodation establishments throughout Australia. The Deafness Forum is of the view that such strategic use of the complaint mechanism is, perhaps unfortunately, the way in which it will need to proceed in order to achieve significant changes. Unfortunately early indications are that the public inquiry process will not be used in response to the lodged complaints. That means the Deafness Forum will have to consider other actions if the strategic goal is to be achieved.

There are many areas that demand actions to assist in overcoming discrimination. For example:

- the failure of courtrooms to ensure hearing access for all participants means there is always a risk that justice will not prevail for people with hearing/deafness disabilities,
- the failure of hospitals to ensure hearing access for all staff and patients means there is always a risk that treatment will be unsuccessful or unnecessarily prolonged for people with hearing/deafness disabilities,
- the failure of education facilities to ensure hearing access for all students means there is always a risk that courses will be failed or not completed by people with hearing/deafness disabilities and
- the failure of a person's doctor, lawyer or accountant to ensure adequate hearing access is provided for their clients means there is always a risk that their services will not be properly delivered to people with hearing/deafness disabilities.

These are just four examples of current discrimination against people with hearing/deafness disabilities that have yet to be eliminated.

## **2. SOCIAL IMPACTS OF THE DDA, IN TERMS OF COSTS AND BENEFITS**

As stated in the Introductory Remarks section above, the DDA has had limited success in achieving benefits for people who are discriminated against because of their hearing impairment or deafness. There has been some benefit for the individuals who have pursued successful complaints. Overall, however, the benefits for people who are Deaf or hearing impaired have been limited to:

- the introduction of regular screenings of some captioned movies in the central business districts of all capital cities and some regional cinemas and
- compensation for hearing impaired people who transferred from analogue to GSM digital mobile telephones and then found that the GSM phones were incompatible with their hearing aids.

The numbers of hearing impaired and Deaf consumers who benefited from these successful complaints must be of benefit to the industries concerned.

There is every reason to believe that one further benefit will soon result; namely an increase (over the next few years) in the amount of captioning of free-to-air television broadcasts (beyond that required by legislation).

The Deafness Forum is unable to provide data on the costs of the introduction of regular screenings of some captioned movies in the central business districts of all capital cities and some regional cinemas. However, it would suggest that the cinemas have inadequately promoted the screenings, which means that they have failed to maximise the revenue potential of the screenings. The costs of compensation for hearing impaired people who transferred from analogue to GSM digital mobile telephones and then found that the GSM phones were incompatible with their hearing aids were extremely modest in their impacts on the total financial situations of the affected telephone companies.

It is important to note that a reduction in discrimination in society leads to more productivity, as people are more able to seek employment and consume goods and services if they stop experiencing discrimination. For example, people who are Deaf or hearing impaired are frequently unemployed or under-employed because of the negative attitude of employers and sheer lack of hearing access. A lack of hearing access limits the extent to which the Deafness Forum's constituents can participate in the entertainment and tourist industries.

The Deafness Forum does not believe that the DDA has resulted in any significant social impact on the community as a whole. However Deafness Forum acknowledges that, without the DDA, many Deaf and hearing impaired people would be isolated and unable to participate in the society and economy at all.

### **3. RESTRICTION OF COMPETITION, FLOWING FROM THE DDA**

The Deafness Forum has no information regarding any restriction of competition flowing from the DDA. It does not believe that any of the outcomes from DDA complaints in the deafness area have in any way restricted competition. Likewise it does not believe that there is anything relating to hearing access in the DDA Standard on Access to Public Transport that in any way restricts competition. It could be said that successful outcomes from DDA complaints actually cause markets to grow, as a result of greater participation by people previously excluded by discrimination. The Deafness Forum's constituents will increase patronage of a facility that reduces barriers to their participation - and we know that a DDA environment is the only way to achieve this - and that seems a healthy outcome in terms of increasing competition.

#### **4. NEED FOR CONSISTENCY BETWEEN REGULATORY REGIMES AND EFFICIENT REGULATORY ADMINISTRATION**

The Deafness Forum considers that it is important to have consistency between regulatory regimes and to have efficient regulatory administration. It considers that there currently is a lack of knowledge of the different reasons for the various regulatory regimes, which results in people with disabilities often being uncertain whether to raise their concerns with the Commonwealth or State/Territory anti-discrimination body. Indeed, the Deafness Forum suspects that some of its constituency is not aware that there is more than one anti-discrimination body. This leads to confusion. More could be done to inform and educate people with disabilities about the various bodies and their roles.

#### **5. COMPLIANCE COSTS AND PAPER WORK BURDENS ON SMALL BUSINESS**

The Deafness Forum is not aware of the compliance costs and level of paper work burdens on small business resulting from the DDA. It may well increase the costs to small business in the short term, but in an anti-discrimination social and business environment brought about by the DDA surely, in the long term, all businesses will make catering to all (i.e. universal design) a reality and there will be no particular costs incurred in removing any discrimination.

The Deafness Forum does not believe that any of the outcomes of DDA complaints in the deafness area would have imposed any burdens on small businesses. Likewise there is nothing about hearing access in the DDA Standard on Access to Public Transport that has imposed any costs or burdens on small businesses. It is only through the DDA environment, including complaints, that we are reaching the stage where a phone equipped with volume control is likely to become the standard issue phone. Once this has been put in place there will be no extra costs in catering to hearing impaired people.

#### **6. RELEVANT ALTERNATIVES TO THE DDA, INCLUDING NON-LEGISLATIVE APPROACHES**

The Deafness Forum believes that, for various reasons, the DDA should continue as one of the mechanisms available to eliminate disability discriminations. It would seem that little could be achieved in reducing discrimination without a legal framework; without a DDA. It seems that few organisations will change voluntarily unless they know the law will be against them. Despite its shortcomings, the existing DDA Standard on Access to Public Transport can be used as a tool to advocate for the elimination of discrimination in other areas. Likewise, despite the limited results to date, the DDA complaint mechanism has the potential to achieve much more - particularly if it is used strategically. DDA Standards should improve efficiency in that businesses know what they have to conform to - and of course so do consumers.

However, there are many additional things that also can be done to seek the elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities. For example, the disability sector itself can:

- Encourage self-help organisation members to energise their members to become consumer advocates and also teach people how to do that.
- Encourage members and others to lodge complaints direct to service providers that fail to provide adequate disability access.

- Establish a mechanism for looking at published Disability Action Plans and contacting the companies to which they belong asking what action has been taken to implement the Plans.
- Encourage people to provide feedback to organisations (government agencies, private businesses, community bodies, etc.) when they identify shortcomings with their access facilities, e.g. if a hearing loop is not working properly let the building owner know.
- Develop and distribute a series of guides for employers, hospitals, hotels, schools, tourism operators, nursing homes, etc. on “How to Make Their Facility (or whatever) Friendly for Employees and/or Clients with Particular Disabilities”.
- Identify case studies of successful people with particular disabilities for use in advocacy campaigns.
- Conduct advocacy campaigns.

Other possibilities, but requiring government action, would include:

- Government regulation to prescribe particular actions designed to eliminate discrimination; e.g. a requirement that all televisions, videorecorders and similar equipment sold in Australia must be capable of displaying captioning (and a similar requirement that all videos, DVDs, etc. must be captioned).
- Government acceptance that its mutual obligation philosophy must apply as equally to itself as to the long-term unemployed, etc.; i.e. government provide whatever it needs to so that those with disabilities have equal economic and social participation prospects as do those without disabilities. For example, implementation of an income support arrangement that ensured no-one was disadvantaged by the additional costs of economic and social participation resulting from having a disability.

All of these approaches can (and should) be pursued in parallel with the DDA.

## **ATTACHMENT A**

### **TEN YEARS OF DDA COMPLAINTS**

Here, from the HREOC Website, are outlines of the outcomes of various DDA complaints made by people who are Deaf or hearing impaired. Perhaps these outcomes might demonstrate to readers what they might achieve if they also lodged complaints. Any reader who lodges a complaint is encouraged to tell the Deafness Forum office about it.

#### In 2002:

##### Hotels provide television captioning

A woman with a hearing impairment complained that a hotel she stayed in did not provide text facilities on in-house television for movies, cable television etc. The complaint was resolved when the hotel agreed to install 3 teletext televisions into the hotel. Further teletext televisions would be installed into all hotel rooms as televisions require replacement. Availability of caption facilities would also be included in the hotel brochure, and notified to the Australian Caption Centre for publication on its Website. A number of similar complaints led to similar agreements by other hotels during 2001-2002, including one chain which agreed to install teletext facilities in 10% of all rooms and to give a 15% discount to deaf people until that target was achieved.

##### Access to interpreter

Parents complained on behalf of their daughter who is profoundly deaf and attends the local primary school. They alleged the education department had failed to provide reasonable accommodation for the girl's disability because it had not employed an Auslan interpreter. The parents claimed their daughter's educational opportunities were being wasted as she could not participate in the curriculum at all without an interpreter. A conciliation process was conducted resulting in the department creating a new position for a full time Auslan interpreter.

#### In 2001:

##### Accommodation of deafness

A woman who is deaf complained of a lack of reasonable accommodation in the workplace including provision of TTY phones, alternatives to audible public address announcements, and lack of interpreters for important meetings. She also alleged harassment by a supervisor for signing with other deaf employees. The complaint was settled with an agreement to provide awareness training for staff and supervisors, to provide for text communication and to pay \$5000 compensation.

#### In 2000:

##### Access for deaf jobseeker

A deaf person complained that a job search company had refused to arrange a sign language interpreter for an interview as requested. The complaint was settled when the company agreed to apologise and to ensure in future that its practices would include

reasonable adjustment for deaf people including interpreting; that it would conduct staff training on accessibility and would consult the complainant on training materials.

#### Deaf access to tourist experience

Two deaf people complained that they had been discriminated against when a tourist adventure experience failed to provide them with Auslan interpreting or a printed copy of the commentary provided by the guide on the experience. The matter was settled without admission of liability when the respondent advised it had made arrangements as follows: two sessions per month with interpreting provided; trials of a hearing loop on the experience; a booklet for deaf participants and a summary sheet of instructions for the experience; and free participation for the complainants to enable them to provide feedback on these arrangements.

#### In 1998:

##### Communications access to Commonwealth program

A woman who is deaf complained that she had been discriminated against by a Commonwealth Department in the provision made by it for communication with deaf people. The matter was settled without admission of liability with an agreement by the agency responsible for the services and programs concerned to take measures including:

- instructing all staff regarding use of and access to TTY phones
- providing information to staff regarding the National TTY Relay service
- reviewing its stationery to ensure that TTY information was included in contact details

#### In 1997:

##### Interpreting in university courses

A deaf student was provided with access to an Auslan interpreter for all university lectures and tutorials during the student's four year course.

##### School students with hearing disabilities

A state-wide support group for parents and their families, to promote the rights of all children with hearing disabilities lodged six representative complaints on behalf of all students with hearing disabilities in a state public education system. The complaints generally alleged that deficiencies in the provision of education services to students with hearing disabilities, constitute discrimination on the grounds of disability because:

- the Department did not provide access to adequate numbers of qualified teachers of the Deaf for students with hearing disabilities
- there was a lack of access to suitably qualified interpreters for sign-dependent students
- resources and personnel funding for students with hearing disabilities who are integrated, was provided on an ad hoc basis
- the Department did not provide the option of a special segregated high school for sign-dependent students with hearing disabilities
- the approach of the Department had been one of lack of support for the promotion and understanding by hearing students, of students with hearing disabilities
- the Department did not provide bilingual and bicultural programs for students with hearing disabilities.



This complaint was resolved through two conciliation meetings in which it was agreed that:

- there will be biannual meetings between the parties, in which issues of concern can be discussed
- members of the support group and the Department will form a working party which will meet on a regular basis to discuss issues concerning the training and competency of teacher aides and teachers of the Deaf, the reciprocal nature of integration, the effectiveness of the Department's current process for dealing with parent grievances and the use of data collection to measure the effectiveness of programs for students with hearing disabilities
- the support group will advise the Department of individual concerns of parents, will monitor how the issues are dealt with at the local level, and provide feedback to the Department
- the support group will contact the state Board of Studies regarding introduction of Auslan as a School Certificate and Higher School Certificate subject and refer this matter to the joint working party.

#### Safety concerns resolved regarding deaf employee

A man with a hearing impairment complained that he had been discriminated against by being refused an interview for a window cleaning job. The employer had been concerned about the man's ability to fulfil safety requirements and hence his ability to perform the range of work required. The complaint was settled without admission of liability with an apology and acknowledgment that there had been a communication breakdown regarding the man's previous experience, payment of \$2000 compensation and an undertaking to develop policies to ensure that the situation did not occur again .

#### In 1996:

##### Builder with hearing impairment

A building worker with a hearing impairment complained he had been discriminated against by his employer refusing to use a notepad to communicate with him, by calling him offensive names and by allowing other employees to make offensive comments to him. The complaint was settled without admission of liability with an apology and payment of wages for a day's sub-contract work.

#### In 1994:

##### Access to interpreters for TAFE student

A TAFE student with a hearing impairment received interpreter assistance for only four of his seven hours of face to face teaching, with the result that he was forced to withdraw from the course. In settlement of his complaint, the TAFE college provided a written apology and agreed that within six months it would develop a policy to ensure full participation by deaf students.

## **ATTACHMENT B**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

#### **DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINTS AGAINST FIVE HOTELS**

The Deafness Forum of Australia has lodged representative complaints against five hotels in the North Ryde area of Sydney on behalf of eight people who are hearing impaired or Deaf. Chief Executive Officer of the Deafness Forum, Mr Brian Rope said, "Virtually no hotels, motels or other types of short-term accommodation establishments meet their obligations to people who live with deafness. They do not provide any of the access facilities that people who are hearing impaired or Deaf need and yet they charge such people exactly the same to stay with them as they charge people with good hearing. The five hotels in the North Ryde area were all approached recently with a view to providing accommodation for the eight complainants who were to attend an event at the nearby Macquarie University. Each of the hotels advised the Deafness Forum that they could not provide any of the hearing access facilities required by those eight persons."

The complaints against the five hotels have been lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, under the Disability Discrimination Act. The complaints point out that guests who are hearing impaired or Deaf:

- can not properly use the hotels' television sets unless captioning access facilities are provided.
- can not use the hotels' telephone services unless voice telephones with volume control and data telephones (TTYs) are provided.
- are unable to hear emergency warning sounds, and so have their safety jeopardised, unless the hotel has alternative means in place to alert them to danger.
- who need to access an assistive listening system to hear speakers at a function or meeting in a hotel are disadvantaged if such systems are not available, and are discriminated against if a public address system is provided for the benefit of hearing people in such a situation.

The Deafness Forum has requested that the Commission investigate the five complaints using a public process, to allow everyone with an interest in the matter to participate. The Forum has indicated that it would be prepared to withdraw the complaints in exchange for commitments to implement the necessary facilities and services in accordance with an agreed timetable. The Deafness Forum hopes that the action being taken will lead to most hotel and other short-term accommodation operators throughout Australia recognising and responding positively to the hearing access needs of people who are hearing impaired or Deaf.

## **ATTACHMENT C**

### **ABOUT THE DEAFNESS FORUM**

#### **Introduction**

Deafness Forum is the peak body for deafness in Australia. Established in early 1993 at the instigation of the Federal government, the Deafness Forum now represents all interests and viewpoints of the Deaf and hearing impaired communities of Australia (including those people who have a chronic disorder of the ear and those who are DeafBlind).

#### **Structure**

The representational base of the Deafness Forum is divided into five Sections:

- a) Hearing Impaired Section - persons with a hearing loss who communicate predominantly orally,
- b) Deaf Section - i.e. the Deaf Community - those persons who consider themselves to be members of that community by virtue of its language (sign language known as Auslan) and culture,
- c) Ear Disorders Section - persons with a chronic ear disorder (such as Tinnitus, Meniere's Disease or Acoustic Neuroma) and
- d) Parents section - parents or legal guardians of persons who are Deaf or hearing impaired,
- e) Service Providers section - service providers to the Deaf and/or hearing impaired communities.

#### **Objectives**

The Deafness Forum exists to improve the quality of life for Australians who are Deaf, have a hearing impairment or have a chronic disorder of the ear by:

- advocating for government policy change and development
- making input into policy and legislation
- generating public awareness
- providing a forum for information sharing and
- creating better understanding between all areas of deafness.

#### **Disability Discrimination Act Standards Project**

In addition to its own work directly in respect of its objectives, the Deafness Forum currently auspices the Disability Discrimination Act Standards Project. It does this on behalf of the peak disability bodies that were members of the now defunct National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations. The Project co-ordinates the disability sector input and consultation into the development of Regulatory Standards under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992). It is expected that the Project will be

taken over from 1 January 2004 by the “in formation” Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, of which the Deafness Forum will be a founding member.

## **Membership**

As at 30 June 2002, the Deafness Forum had 91 organisation members and 123 individual members. (It also regularly consults with all other known organisations operating in the deafness sector that are not amongst its membership.)

## **Community Involvement**

The following pen pictures of the Deafness Forum’s current Board members and key staff demonstrate the broad extent to which that group of people are involved with the specific deafness sector and the broader disability sector. There is no doubt that the Deafness Forum is consumer-driven and well able to represent the interests and concerns of the entire deafness sector, including:

- people who have a hearing impairment
- people who are oral deaf
- the signing Deaf community
- people who have a chronic ear disorder
- the DeafBlind community
- parents who have children from one of the above groups in their families

## **Diana Hodgetts**

Diana has been a Director of the Deafness Forum since April 1996. She lives in Hobart, Tasmania. She was elected as a Director by the Parent Section until 2001, then by the Deaf Section. She has served a term as Deputy Chairperson of the Board. She is a Deaf person, who uses Auslan to communicate. She is married and has two Deaf children. Diana is employed by the Tasmanian Deaf Society as Deaf Liaison/Information Officer and as an Auslan Tutor at Adult Education. She is part of a group for Disabilities Awareness Training within Tasmanians with Disabilities. Diana also has been a Teacher of Deaf Studies and a Teacher’s Aide at the Claremont Hearing Impaired Project. She has an extensive history of involvement with community organisations, including Tasmanian Sports Association of the Deaf, Hobart Deaf Committee and Hobart Signing Choir. She was a founding Board member of the Tasmanian Deaf Society and was a long-standing member of the Tasmanian State Advisory Committee on Library Services to People with Disabilities. She was Tasmanian representative on the National Working Party on Captioning and now serves on the Deafness Forum’s own Captioning Issues Committee.

## **Stan Batson (current Deputy Chairperson)**

Stan has been a Director of the Deafness Forum since December 1997 and was Chairperson from 2000 - 2002. He lives in Geelong, Victoria and was elected as a Director by the Deaf Section. He is a Deaf person, who uses Auslan to communicate. He is married. In retirement, Stan works part time as a researcher of Deaf history at La Trobe University in Melbourne. He is a qualified teacher of Auslan. He is Deputy Chairman of the Deafness Foundation (Victoria) and has an extensive history of involvement with a range of community organisations. These include Deaf Clubs and church organisations for

people who are deaf. He currently represents the Deafness Forum on the Telstra Disability Forum.

### **Margaret Robertson (current Chairperson)**

Margaret has been a Director of the Deafness Forum since October 1999, and was elected as Chairperson in October 2002. She lives in Melbourne, Victoria and was elected as a Director by the Hearing Impaired Section. She has a progressive, sensorineural hearing loss and has been reliant on hearing aids for more than 15 years. She also uses various other techniques to assist her communicate. These include assisted-listening devices, captioning and speech reading. By profession she is a psychologist and she worked in university counselling for 23 years, eight as the Director of a Counselling Service. She now counsels part time in the area of hearing impairment and tinnitus, and is currently developing a psychological rehabilitation model based on cognitive-behavioural approaches to therapy. She has a history of involvement with community organisations, in particular Better Hearing Australia, at both the local and state levels. She also served as a member of the Victorian Government's Reference Committee for the Redevelopment of Services for Deaf and Hearing Impaired people. Margaret currently represents Deafness Forum on the Hearing Services Industry Forum.

### **Lynette Walker**

Lyn has been a Director of the Deafness Forum since October 1999. She lives in Melbourne, Victoria and was elected as a Director by the Service Provider Section. She is employed in the area of special education and has extensive experience in the field of education for deaf children. She also has an extensive history of involvement with community organisations, in particular the Deafness Foundation (Victoria).

### **Sheila Hittich**

Sheila has been a Director of the Deafness Forum since February 2000. She lives in Perth, Western Australia and was elected as a Director by the Ear Disorders Section. She has a hearing impairment. She uses various techniques to assist her communicate. These include hearing aids, assisted-listening devices, captioning and lip reading. She has an extensive history of involvement with community organisations, including Better Hearing Australia (WA), Tinnitus WA, Deafness Council WA, ACROD and the Disability Access Improvement Network. She has been a member of the Australian Hearing Services Consumers Panel and the Liaison Disability Services Commission WA.

### **Kathy Challinor**

Kathy has been a Director of the Deafness Forum since October 2002. She lives in Tamworth, NSW and was elected as a Director by the Ear Disorders Section. She has Tinnitus and a mild-to-moderate hearing loss herself. She has extensive experience in hearing assessment and knowledge of hearing difficulties arising from her employment as a Clinical Nurse Consultant Audiometrist for 20 years. Kathy has a particular passion about noise injury prevention in rural communities and the need for appropriate hearing services in rural and remote Australia. She has been involved in the development of a Graduate Certificate in Audiometry Nursing, which will be available to registered nurses throughout Australia in 2003. Kathy is currently Treasurer of the Community Nurse Audiometry Association, a Preceptor for the University of New England's Bachelor of

Nursing, and a lecturer in university and TAFE courses relating to audiometry and hearing issues. She is also a member of Self Help for Hard of Hearing and the Australian Tinnitus Association (NSW).

### **Claire Harris**

Claire has been a Director of the Deafness Forum since October 2002. She lives in Adelaide, South Australia and was elected as a Director by the Parent Section. She is a parent of a profoundly deaf child who has a cochlear implant and currently is employed as the Development Officer of the Cora Barclay Centre. She is a member of Parents of Hearing Impaired South Australia. She has been a member of the Cora Barclay Centre Council and the SA Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Working Party.

### **Ruth Fotheringham**

Ruth has been a Director of the Deafness Forum since October 2002. She lives in Sydney, NSW and was elected as a Director by the Hearing Impaired Section. She has had a hearing loss for over 30 years and acquired a cochlear implant in 2002. She joined Better Hearing Australia in 1972 and is still an active member, being on the Committee of Management for BHA Sydney. She also is a member of the Blacktown City Council Disability Access Advisory Committee and the Deafness Council of NSW Committee. Ruth previously has been a member of the Australian Hearing Services Steering Committee for Expanded Service Delivery, the Commonwealth Government's Hearing Services Advisory Committee and the External Review Panel for the NSW TAFE Audiometry Certificate Courses. She also has a wider interest in people with disabilities, having worked as a Social Educator for people with an intellectual disability prior to retirement. She has been nominated to represent the Deafness Forum on the Board of the "in formation" Australian Federation of Disability Organisations.

### **Veronica Pardo**

Veronica has been a Director of the Deafness Forum since October 2002. She lives in Melbourne, Victoria and was elected as a Director by the Service Provider Section. She is currently employed as the Manager - Policy & Development of VSDC - Services for Deaf Children. Previously, Veronica has held positions relating to Auslan curriculum, Deaf studies and sign language research. She has a passionate interest in empowering people and is committed to working proactively to achieve systemic social change in a way that benefits service users and affords them self-determination to direct that change. Veronica has been granted leave of absence from the Board until the end of 2003.

### **Jo Quayle**

Jo has been a Director of the Deafness Forum since December 2002. She lives in Echuca, Victoria and was appointed as a Director to represent the Parent Section. One of her children has a severe bi-lateral sensory neural hearing loss. He undertakes his studies as a mainstream student with the assistance of a trained Teacher of the Deaf (Visiting Teacher Service) and a trained notetaker. Jo has been involved with the Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation since 1992 and has been its President for three years. She has served on a reference committee that fine-tuned the establishment of Deaf Infolink throughout rural and regional Victoria, for the Victorian Minister for Human Services. She is a member of a reference group with the Office of School Education in

Victoria to assist with an analysis of government support and services provided for Deaf and hearing impaired students in Victorian government schools.

### **John Paton**

John has been a Director of the Deafness Forum, filling in for Veronica Pardo, since March 2003. He was appointed by the remainder of the Board, having indicated an interest in joining the Board when an opportunity arose. John is currently employed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Deaf Society. He has been involved in the disability/welfare sector since 1987 in a variety of senior management roles. John is committed to making a difference to people's lives. John also worked in the federal Attorney General's Department for ten years and brings a balance of bureaucratic and not-for-profit skills to the Board. He is the Treasurer of the ACROD (Victoria) Committee. John has presented on disability issues at a number of Conferences.

### **Brian Rope OAM**

Brian has been Chief Executive Officer and Company Secretary of the Deafness Forum since April 1996. He has an extensive history of involvement with community organisations, in particular the Councils on the Ageing at ACT and National level. He was awarded an OAM in 1992 for his services to the community. He has worked in the general disability sector for over a decade. He was a Deafness Forum representative on the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations until it ceased to operate and is a member of the working group establishing an Australian federation of Disability Organisations. Brian is also Deputy Convenor of the Disability Discrimination Act Standards Project, a member of the Attorney-General's Working Party on DDA Standards and a Deafness Forum voting representative to the Australian Council of Social Service.

### **Kirsten Preece**

Kirsten has been the Policy & Project Officer of the Deafness Forum since October 2002. She has immediate family members with deafness, Tinnitus and Meniere's Disease. She has an extensive history of paid and voluntary work with a variety of church and community organisations. Those involvements have included being an English language tutor and teacher, a direct care worker and a nursing aide. She has undertaken a review of a disabilities service, taught English to Japanese students with disabilities and advocated for children, youth and people with disabilities. Kirsten is currently a member of the Christian World Service committee and its International Programmes sub-committee, and a member of the Uniting Church Assembly Theology and Discipleship Reference Group.

### **Robyn Swadling**

Robyn has been the Deafness Forum's part-time (6 hours per week) Administrative Officer since 2002. Robyn has an extensive history of involvement with church organisations and their activities. She also has experience of providing support services for students with various disabilities, through the Australian National University's Disability Support Unit. When not working for the Forum, Robyn is employed elsewhere as a medical typist.