



Australian DeafBlind Council

23 July 2010

Ms Patricia Scott
Commissioner
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

Dear Ms Scott

**Productivity Commission Inquiry into Long Term
Disability Care and Support Scheme
Hearing in Sydney – 21 July 2010**

I would like to thank the Commissioners for the opportunity for Sven Topp, President of the Australian DeafBlind Council (“ADBC”) to be able to speak to our submission on Wednesday 21 July 2010 in Sydney. Thank you also for being as accommodating with regard to the scheduling to allow Sven the time to settle in once he arrived, it was very much appreciated.

I would just like to clarify Sven’s comments on the cessation of hearing services after the age of 21 years. This is a funding issue with regard to the replacement of speech processors in cochlear implants. Presently people with cochlear implants over the age of 21 years in Australia do not receive financial support for the replacement of the speech processors which only have a limited lifespan of 5-10 years and can cost up to \$10,000 to replace. People who are Deafblind are often unable to work, cannot afford private health insurance and receive disability support pensions therefore resulting in this cost being completely out of reach.

Just recently some members of ADBC received letters from Cochlear Ltd stating that some of the older model speech processors that are still working will no longer be repaired for simple servicing issues due to the unavailability of parts and many people who are deafblind fear that they will be forced to no longer use the cochlear implant if they are unable to afford the cost of upgrading.

This is an issue ADBC campaigned strongly for during the Senate Inquiry into Hearing Health in Australia and ADBC was pleased that a recommendation for the funding of speech processor replacement in people over the age of 21 was put forward. This will fall into line with current funding arrangements for those people under the age of 21. We truly hope that government will take up the challenge and adopt this as policy.

I hope this clarifies the question which was raised at the hearing and again, I thank for your time.

Yours sincerely

Alisa Wills
Administration Officer
Australian DeafBlind Council