

Canberra Deaf Children's Association Newsletter



May 2009

DCA conference 2009

On Friday May 1, CDCA president, Luke Halpin, attended the Deaf Children's Association (DCA) parent's conference in Melbourne at the Australian school for the Deaf.

Jim and Marilyn Spinks, who were engaged by the Victorian government to Review Deaf education in Victoria, spoke after dinner. Explaining that, although the outcomes of the review are not yet officially released, they could provide other states with important data. Deaf groups in other states could use this information to help with any lobbying they may need to do to improve their Child's education.

The following day parents from every state and territory (except the Northern Territory who does not have a parents group) attended a full day forum to discuss many different state-based and national issues.

First was a state-by-state presentation on how the parent groups work in each states. Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia are all very similar to us here in Canberra (no government funding or support). Western Australia has two groups - one from the private education system and another from the public education system. They only discovered each other existed

when Deaf Children Australia (DCA) introduced them two months before this forum.

Tasmania does not have a parents group, but a mother from Hobart who wants to start a parents group, contacted DCA earlier this year and was subsequently invited to attend the Melbourne forum to help her gather ideas to assist her.

After these presentations it was suggested by DCA, and agreed to by all the parents that a permanent

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National Parent Committee should be created, with the help of DCA, to help tackle bigger issues and have a louder voice, to not only help in national matters, but support other states with their issues.

Other ideas were a national register of parent groups so that family moving or visiting other states can contact local parent groups for information or attend functions. This can also help families who move regularly, like Defence families, so they can also have a constant support base or at least contact a group to get started in a new area.

It has also been suggested the data base provide information what services are available in certain areas (i.e. Australian Hearing, Shepherd Centre, Itinerant Hearing Teachers) as this can be important information for people looking to move interstate.

Tina Carter from Parents of Deaf (POD) council in Brisbane presented on how they joined three parent groups into one group to create a stronger voice in Queensland. Explaining how they have grown and now expanded into Townsville and created a working relationship with Australian Hearing and other service providers, plus have a strong social network and a strong membership base. A group discussion found most states have been through this process in previous years. Now WA is experiencing the same consolidation, thanks to the DCA.

After lunch was a demonstration by DCA on a national survey of parents on the NAPLaN, National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy test held in the education system. Alarming statistics showing that approximately 20% of students did not participate in the tests. In some cases in Victoria and Queensland principals have asked parents to remove their child from the NAPLaN test, stating that because the child was deaf, they would find the test difficult and fail the test. Similar situations have been raised by parents of other disabled children with varying disabilities in main stream schools. There is a presumption of poor results which will effect the results that the principals use to attract students and influence parents. Abusing the system this way and undermining the intentions of the test

are a great concern. All parents agreed that a letter should be sent to Julia Gillard MP, Federal Minister for Education about this issue.

If your child has participated in the NAPLaN test, please visit the DCA web site and follow the links to the survey.

In conclusion, it was a successful meeting and many positive ideas came from the forum. The future is looking brighter all the time and compared to Tas and SA, in the ACT we are well ahead in services and support, but there is more work to be done.

Luke Halpin, President

Australian Hearing Waiting Area

CDCA has raised the issue of the lack of child-friendly facilities in the waiting area of the (not so) new centre in Civic.

Any family attending Australian hearing with young children has to bring all their own entertainment, or let kids run riot, an option which the pensioners also in waiting room don't seem to like much.

There is also the risk of bored kids running out the door - onto a busy street.

CDCA has offered to contribute to the waiting area. We would like to thank CDCA members who provided feedback and ideas regarding this. We will let you know how this progresses in coming months.

CDCA board meeting Thursday 18 June from 7:30PM. All members are welcome. Grant Cameron Community Centre, Mulley St Holder.

NEWS & EVENTS

Mums Night

CDCA mum's nights are infamous among those who go. Watch out for an email on the next one.

Kids outings

The CDCA board is planning some outings for kids and families. Possibilities on the cards include:

- Cockington Green
- Questacon
- Steam Train ride
- Ten Pin Bowling

CDCA Christmas Party

Sunday 29 November 11am - 1pm

Loud Shirt Day

Thomas attended The Shepherd Centre in Canberra for nearly three years. The therapy sessions taught us how to help him develop speech, language and listening skills, and the playgroup was wonderful support for me as well as allowing Thomas and his brothers to meet and play with children with hearing loss. This year he started Kindergarten at St Clare of Assisi Primary School. I have been very impressed with the support he has received there and the enthusiasm of his teacher to learn as much as she can about how she can help Thomas. Thomas has settled in particularly well and is an enthusiastic learner.

This all lead to me asking the school about Loud Shirt Day – the main fundraiser for The Shepherd Centre. The four Kinder classes (107 students) wore all sorts of colourful tops to school on Friday 15th May. They coloured in a loud shirt drawing, they got their photo taken all together forming a huge shirt shape, and all got a Loud Shirt Day sticker. Over \$500 was raised and we hope to involve the whole school next year. They even appeared on WIN news that night!

The Shepherd Centre provided wonderful support for our family and we appreciate all they did in preparing Thomas for school. Loud Shirt Day is a way for us to thank The Shepherd Centre for the fantastic service they provide at no cost for families with children like Thomas.

Wendy (Thomas's mum)

This was one of a great many events at schools and workplaces. Loud Shirt Day not only raises money for The Shepherd Centre, it also raises awareness of hearing loss and the need for special support and early intervention programs.

Classroom acoustics mapped to help deaf kids

A Sydney High School student has, for what is believed to be the first time, mapped the acoustics of school classrooms.



Research by Chaneg Torres has discovered where the loudest places are in a classroom, and why sound differences occur. It's not always where you'd expect. Presenting his work to the International Science and Engineering Fair in the US, Chaneg won a fourth and third prize. His work could have implications for the teaching of hearing-impaired students.

The ABC PM program on 27 May ran a story on this remarkable science project. A transcript and audio of the story is available from the website at www.abc.net.au/pm. Search for 27 May and 'Sydney high school student wins international science prize'.

Online Resources:

Aussie Deaf Kids (new site)

Online support and information for parents of deaf & hearing impaired children in Australia. Share experiences, ideas and concerns with other parents who really understand how you feel.

www.aussiedeafkids.org.au

Deaf Children Australia

The Deaf Children Australia Helpline is an information, support and referral service for families of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children and young Adults. The Helpline number is 1800 645 916. DCA has begun providing advocacy and information services across Australia via the national Helpline.

www.deafchildreinaustralia.org.au

Parent Council of Deaf Education

PCDE statement: Our mission is to work with parents and families of deaf children and young people, regardless of their background, to promote their rights in all aspects of their lives from birth to the end of tertiary education.

More information on PCDE can be found at their website www.pcde.org.

Facebook

Strange but true. The social networking phenomenon also includes parents talking about their deaf kids. A search for 'deaf kids', 'hearing aids' or 'cochlear implants' will turn up a surprising number of groups from all over the world and locally.

www.facebook.com

ACT Special Education Review

The first round of consultation for the ACT Special Education Review have finished and the resulting discussion paper is available from the website at <http://www.actspedialedreview.com/discussion-paper>. The discussion paper links on the website have been dodgy, so a copy is available on the CDCA web site.

CDCA is on the reference group for the review, so concerns of the membership can be represented.

CDCA made a submission to the review, based on input from members. A copy is available on the CDCA website.

The next phase is for individuals and groups to attend community forums and/or email responses to the discussion paper. There will six forums and the variety of times and venues allow an opportunity for anyone who is interested to attend. They will be held from 19th May to 6th June. The closing date for written submissions is 5th June. Again, CDCA members are encouraged to read the discussion paper and give feedback for inclusion in a group submission.

Please email submissions to Alex Turner:
maturner@grapevine.com.au

CDCA Membership 2009

The yearly membership contribution is \$20.00. Membership is available to parents, relatives, professionals and friends. Financial members receive newsletters up to six times a year and are eligible to borrow the CDCA toys, resources, games, books etc. Your contributions enable us to buy new resources for the library and assist in the running of the Association. Please make cheque payable to *Canberra Deaf Children's Association* and mail to:

**The Treasurer
Canberra Deaf Children's Association
PO Box 2291
Tuggeranong ACT 2901**

Please complete the following form and return with your payment so we can maintain up to date details.

Parent's/Carer's Name:			
Address:			
Email:			
Home Phone:		Work Phone:	
Mobile:		Fax:	

Please include all children in the family

Child's Name	Date of Birth	Hearing Loss