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Personal submission to
The Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport
for the report on the hearing Health and Wellbeing of Australia

Terms of reference addressed

4. Current access, support and cost of hearing assessments, treatment and support, Auslan language services, and new hearing aid technology;

I write my submission as a Signing Deaf woman an Australian Sign Language of the Deaf user. (Auslan)

I have lived my entire life as a Deaf woman. I am 57 years old, married and have raised three hearing sons . My husband and our sons are all bi lingual, they have my husbands hearing language English, and my deaf language Auslan. My home language is there for Auslan.

I draw your attention via this submission requesting that Federal Government review the decision to exclude Deaf Auslan Language users over 65 years from receiving NDIS Auslan interpreter Funding. To enable them to access the wider community activities equitably via Auslan interpreting (*4. Current access, support and cost of hearing assessments, treatment and support, Auslan language services, and new hearing aid technology;*)

Currently my Deaf elders over 65 years whom have waited patiently all their lives up until 65 years, had no Auslan interpreter funding to access the wider community activities, that people with a disability under 65 years eligible to receive NDIS funding packages now can. This includes me a disabled Deaf Auslan user.

I appeal to you to hear my lived experience. I am not yet 65 I have advocated for our Deaf Communities health, access and well being for decades both professionally and voluntarily. I understand that what I achieve for myself also will benefit/Improve the lives of my peers/ community members. This time I am advocating for the invisible GAP in the NDIS role out July 2016. This a GAP that many people, did not understand until I wrote to the government impacted harshly on our aged Deaf elders and just like our Disability was/is often invisible until we start signing to communicate.

Up until 2004 you might be quite shocked to hear of a little known Gap that I and my community experienced as constituents (taxpayers) of Australia. I/we were unable to access a private medical appointment in my own language Auslan, and I was at that time an an Australian born Tax payer for decades. Sir, I had to pay an Auslan interpreter to speak/translate to the Doctor my Deaf voice. Or write back and forward with Dr's that often had illiterate hand writing and no patience/ diverse cultural understanding, for my need to write or use an Auslan interpreter. I was often treated like a low class citizen of Australia.

Our Hon. Ex Prime Minister John Howard changed all that with his remarkable insight and compassion for the Deaf Community of Australia by instigating the National Auslan Booking Service known as NABS <http://www.nabs.org.au>

Since 2004 I have been given the privilege to access and attend a Doctor appointment (Private, medical appointment) on my own in privacy, with a FREE Auslan interpreter funded by Australian Government. Has this privilege been mine only? Has it come with age limits or boundaries ?

No our entire Deaf Communities health has improved as a result, as we have had access to something that we could not access equally, prior to 2004. We now attend regular check ups and consultations and confidentially rapport with our Medical practitioners and private health specialists.

However, sadly It is now 2016 and my entire Deaf community is fearful that National Auslan Interpreter Services (NABS) will not continue post December 2016. Why?

The July 2016 roll out NSW actually cut off NABS to our Deaf elders however a review and letters from like minded people like myself saw and urgent review allocate funding to keep NABS up and running until December 2016. for the interim until these concerns were addressed.

No different to the wider Australian community, we the deaf community are ageing and come closer and closer to the NDIS cut off of age 65years. Once a person is 65years of age with a disability we are not eligible to receive NDIS funding. Where we shall enter the Aged Care System which does not have AUSLAN interpreter Funding included.

Frightfully It is not clear if National Auslan Interpreter Service (NABS) will continue to be funded to provide access via interpreting at all private health appointments for the Deaf Community. There is rumour that NABS will be de funded as the Deaf receiving NDIS payment that are aged under 65 receive, will be able to pay for the NABS Service provision just like any Disability Service provision we require from their NDIS package. This rumour means that Deaf over 65 will lose the access to free NABS interpreter funding for private health appointments (GPS etc) if the rumour proves true post December 2016.

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Hence I would like to suggest a culturally appropriate and linguistically recommendation/proposal to address this . I have never liked to complain unless I can offer a viable solution to the challenge. There for may I ask for your support in advocating the important diverse health and language needs of my elder Deaf community over 65 years to have NDIS Auslan packages.

Please appeal to Ministers responsible in the role out of NDIS that at least the current NABS funding for people over 65 years who are Deaf and use Auslan continues after December 2016, and is not suddenly snatched away from these remarkable elders of my Deaf Community like it was intermittently in July 2016.

These deaf elders are remarkable " baby boomers" the home front soldiers of the successful economic position of our country. They/ we have battled on worked hard, mostly in menial jobs without the opportunity to gain tertiary qualifications due to no access to Tertiary education for the deaf in the day, paid tax, and are proud AUSTRALIANS too. No we didn't fight wars as we were not accepted into the Defence Force (albeit there were so many Jobs that we could have done too) due to deafness but we were behind our country working hard to ensure the government had the tax to support our defence force people.

Certainly as planned in the NDIS role out, deaf People UNDER 65 will be able to purchase Auslan interpreters service for private health from Nabs or any interpreter provider of their choice with their NDIS funding. BUT importantly please see the serious GAP I am highlighting here to you and allow Deaf people over 65 years who rely on NABS now, to continue to do so as always , which the Aged Care System doesn't include.

To ignore this would not be in breach of the "accord to the United Nations Convention Ratification on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, of which our Federal Government is a Signatory off.

Having submitted this request. I would like to again address the 4. *Current access, support and cost of hearing assessments, treatment and support, Auslan language services, and new hearing aid technology;*

The Aged Care System that my Deaf Elders over 65 ineligible for NDIS funding packages move to from the DSP or from their jobs when they retire has no Auslan interpreting component. If you take Private Health, NABS funding away from them in December 2016, and you continue to not include Deaf Auslan user elders access to the wider community via **Auslan interpreter component packages under NDIS for over 65 years Auslan users** you continue to create barriers inequitably to them. Other people who live with a disability over 65 years have Federal and State laws in place to ensure the minimal access to services and activities in our wider community. Services must provide minimal access ie: ramps, lifts etc .

Hence these disabled over 65 years can get into the wider community activities and access the service provision, activity or event functioning in the Aged Care System using the law.

However the DDA , does not cover Auslan interpreting for deaf elders over 65 years whom receive no NDIS package to purchase their own Auslan interpreter in the Aged Care system. Please ensure that the NDIS does not continue to discriminate in this way, on our deaf elders over 65years life choices providing Auslan interpreter funding under the NDIS for people under 65 years, but not to our deaf elders.

Sincerely
Concerned deaf Auslan user
14.11.2016