

Submission No 109

Deaf Australia Inc.

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BY: LACA

**Inquiry into the draft Disability  
(Access to Premises – Buildings)  
Standards**

**Submission to the  
House Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs**

### **About Deaf Australia Inc.**

Deaf Australia Incorporated (previously Australian Association of the Deaf) was established in 1986 by members of the Australian Deaf Community. It represents the views primarily of Deaf people who use Auslan (Australian Sign Language). It is a true consumer organisation – it is the only national organisation that is wholly managed and controlled by Deaf people themselves.

Deaf Australia's mission is to represent, promote, preserve and inform the development of the Australian Deaf community, its language and cultural heritage.

Deaf Australia provides information about Deaf people and practices systemic advocacy on a range of issues of importance to Deaf people of all ages, from birth to old age.

### **Comments on the draft standards**

Since our constituents are people who are Deaf, our comments focus only on issues of concern to them.

For Deaf people the major issue of concern in relation to access to premises is access to information. In particular:

#### **Information conveyed over public address systems:**

Information that is conveyed over public address systems is not accessible for people who are Deaf. The Standards need to ensure that it is. There are two ways this can be done:

**a) Hearing augmentation**

Hearing augmentation has been addressed in a submission from Deafness Forum of Australia. Deaf Australia endorses the submission made by Deafness Forum on hearing augmentation.

**b) Visual information**

Information should be displayed visually, e.g. by the use of electronic visual text display systems.

#### **Information conveyed by other auditory methods e.g., television screens:**

Information that is conveyed to the public in ways other than over a public address system, e.g., via television screens, needs to be captioned if it includes auditory content.

The implications of this for public facilities such as cinemas should also be addressed. Captioned movies are now widely available as is the equipment required to screen them. Cinemas that screen movies for public consumption should be required to include captioned movies (and by extension, movies with audio descriptions for people who are blind) in their programs on an appropriate pro rata basis. We would suggest that since one in six people in the Australian population has a hearing loss, then for every six screens in a cinema complex, at least one screen in the complex should be required to show captioned movies on a regular basis, and that this be required to be in place by the year 2020. We would also suggest that by 2050 this ratio should be one in four.

**Information conveyed in emergency situations:**

In emergencies such as evacuations for fire or other threats, Deaf people need to be informed of the emergency in a visual way. Emergency and fire alarms that have both an audible and visual signal are widely available and should be a standard requirement in all public buildings.

**Information conveyed over a security system:**

Buildings, car parks and lifts often have audible intercom based security systems. This makes the building or car park inaccessible for Deaf people and compromises the safety of Deaf people using the lift.

It should be a standard requirement that all security systems include a visual as well as an audible communication medium.