

the Deaf
Society

Equity for deaf people



DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2015 - 2018

The Deaf Society of New South Wales



FOREWARD

Disability is a personal thing. We all have friends and family who experience disability. For me, it is very personal. I am proudly deaf. I have been fortunate to have a good education, a career where I can make a difference and a great circle of family and friends. And yet I, along with all those in the Deaf Community, still face unnecessary attitudinal and systemic blocks that interrupt our lives.

There are too many stories of barriers, hardship and unrealised potential for people with disability.

- There are about 4 million Australians who report having a disability resulting from a health condition and 1.3 million Australians with a severe/profound core activity limitation - and these numbers are growing.
- Australia ranks 21st out of 29 OECD countries in employment participation for those with disability.
- About 45% of those with disability in Australia are living either near or below the poverty line, more than double the OECD average of 22%.¹

In my role as President of the Deaf Society I can now play a much greater part in changing these statistics. As a team we can, and will, do more.

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) commits the Deaf Society to better support the range of communication preferences of those who are deaf,

deafblind and hard of hearing. We have included actions to make sure we better meet the needs of students, employees, business associates and our stakeholders with any disability.

This DIAP includes actions that will result in better access and participation for people with disability where individuals, families, communities and businesses will benefit.

I participated in one of the workshops to develop this DIAP. I was inspired by the passion, insight and leadership from the diverse group of people around the table. The Deaf Society looks forward to finding new and fairer ways of doing things to ensure inclusive access for all people with disability.

Alastair McEwin
President

¹ PricewaterhouseCoopers. Nov 2011. *Disability expectations: Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia*. Australia.



INTRODUCTION

The Deaf Society has been working for many years to improve access to people who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing - and their families - to their communities.

The Deaf Society is an important resource for the Deaf Community, a culturally and linguistically diverse group with its own culture and language.

The Deaf Society is building capability to better support deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people in their preferred language. It is also a valued source of expertise for other people, families, the broader community and businesses.

- 1 in 6 Australians are affected by hearing loss. By 2050, this is forecast to grow to 1 in 4².
- Approximately 90% of people born with hearing impairment are born into hearing families. Hearing loss is mostly associated with ageing³.
- In 2011 there were over 2,500 sign language users in NSW and nearly 10,000 sign language users across Australia⁴.
- It is estimated there are over 2,500 deafblind people, aged 18–65 in Australia (about 500 in NSW)⁵.

The Deaf Society provides Auslan training, skill development, community development, interpreting, translation, employment and workplace support, advocacy and information services. It employs nearly 60 office based staff and over 200 casual teachers, interpreters, and support workers, with about half the office based staff being deaf or hard of hearing.

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) will complement the Deaf Society's Strategic Plan 2015–2018 and help realise equity for deaf people.

The DIAP will also help achieve equity for the Deaf Society's staff, students, their families, business and community partners who may have a disability – any disability. Some people may have more than one disability and experience multiple barriers.

It will do this by aligning with the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan and its four focus areas:

- Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
- Creating liveable communities
- Supporting access to meaningful employment
- Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), Australia

³ Access Economics. (2007). Making sense, A report into dual sensory loss and multiple disabilities in Australia, Sydney, Australia

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2011), 2011 Census Data: Table Builder Basic – Cultural and Language Diversity, ABS, Canberra

⁵ Access Economics. (2007). Making sense, A report into dual sensory loss and multiple disabilities in Australia, Sydney, Australia

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 all focus on what people with disability - including those who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing - should be able to do. There is work to do to remove the things that get in their way to living a full life in an inclusive society.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is planned for full implementation by 2018. This will significantly change how people with disability are supported, enabling them to have much greater choice and control over their lives (and their funding). The Deaf Society is a registered NDIS provider. It has

included structural and service shifts in its Strategic Plan to realise the opportunities afforded by the NDIS.

But to achieve an equitable society will require more than a government scheme. It will need everyone to make sure their 'patch' is truly inviting and accessible to people with disability.

The Deaf Society is committed to being a leading employer, service provider, community and business partner for those with disability. DIAP is about what new things will be done to remove barriers and foster access.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This DIAP will be implemented over a period of dynamic and complex reform to the disability sector. It will be reviewed by the end of January each year and adjusted where needed to ensure that it maintains relevance, is responsive to feedback and is opportunistic as the NDIS develops and governments, businesses and communities adjust.

The DIAP will support and complement the Deaf Society's Strategic Plan 2015-2018, which lays down the strategic directions. The two plans demonstrate

a high level of organisational commitment to improving access for people with disability and are the ultimate responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer and the Board.

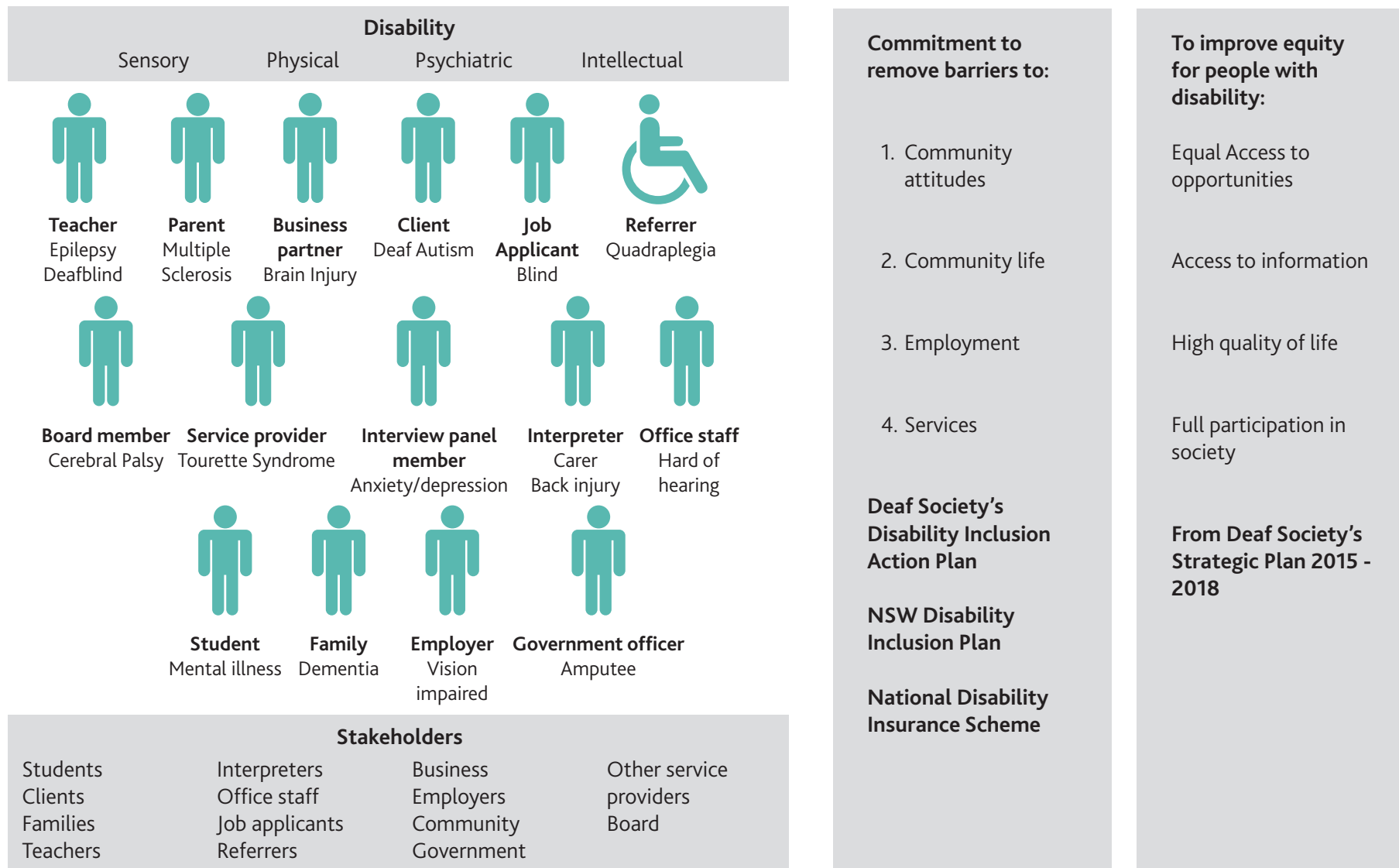
The Director, Growth and Development will oversee the implementation of the Plan. Each action has a designated leader who is responsible for managing and monitoring its implementation.

Progress on the Plan will be made public on the website by August each year.



DEAF SOCIETY'S DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2015 - 2018

The Deaf Society has a responsibility to improve access to/for its stakeholders with disability. Any disability.



Everyone in society has the same rights.

United Nations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; NSW Disability Inclusion Act; Discrimination acts; EEO



FOCUS AREA 1: DEVELOPING POSITIVE COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Action 1.1 Support governments and service providers to foster deaf friendly communities and address attitudinal and communication barriers

Building the capacity of community and people with disability, their families and carers strengthens informal support and access to community. It enables people to be more independent and reduces the need for funded support.

The new Disability Inclusion Act (the Act) commenced in December 2014. The Act strengthens the commitment to inclusion, consultation with people with disability and protection of their rights. Governments are putting in place services that provide community information, linkages and capacity building. This is a critical component of the NDIS.

While the intent is for these services to respond to a diverse population, it is difficult for them to have all the capabilities needed in house to meet everyone's needs.

Given the growing emphasis on community based solutions, it is critical for the Deaf Society to find financially sustainable ways to support these services.

This action will:

- Identify existing resources, and develop others if needed to support governments and service providers to build communities that are responsive to the needs of deaf, deafblind and

hard of hearing people.

- Target a broad spectrum of media including print, radio and television with the aim of highlighting accessibility issues that deaf people face
- Leverage community events such as the Deaf Festival, National Week of Deaf People, and Hearing Awareness Week
- Target employers and businesses.

Action 1.2 Improve Deaf Society responsiveness to the range of disabilities

Deaf Society staff are either skilled or receive training to respond to the needs of those who are deaf or deafblind. We are looking to strengthen our awareness and skills in the area of people who are hard of hearing, or have other disabilities.

This action will:

- Include a statement of responsibility to respond to the needs of people with diverse disability in staff position descriptions and work agreements
- Provide a copy of this DIAP to all existing staff, and include it as a part of the orientation for new staff
- Nominate a staff member who can support other staff to respond to the needs of people with disability
- Ensure staff have access to information about the range of disabilities.



FOCUS AREA 2: CREATING LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

Action 2.1 Explore the feasibility of a targeted geographic and/or business segment pilot that fosters deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing friendly communities

The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan has committed the NSW Government to working with local governments in NSW on projects and pilots that contribute to liveable communities.

Communication and cultural understanding are major barriers for the wider community to interact effectively and transact services with people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. The contribution of deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people as consumers, employers and employees has unrealised potential.

This action will:

- Scope and cost a pilot to establish a geographic precinct of deaf friendly shops and services within where communication barriers are minimised and community spirit fostered
- Scope and cost a pilot that targets a vertical segment of the business community
- Identify possible funding sources and partners.

Action 2.2 Increase social networking opportunities for people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing, and their families

Consultations with the Deaf Community across NSW in 2014 indicated that regional offices provided a more comfortable and supportive environment and fostered a sense of Deaf Community spirit compared with the Deaf Society's head office at Parramatta. Gaps have been identified in existing social networks for those who are Aboriginal, families and those who do not consider themselves to be a part of the Deaf Community.

This action will:

- Map existing social networking opportunities and identify gaps
- Develop a strategy that will provide greater and more inclusive social network opportunities.



FOCUS AREA 3: SUPPORTING ACCESS TO MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT

Action 3.1: Review the Deaf Society's recruitment practices to ensure policies and process support access for people with any disability.

The Deaf Society has a focus on recruitment to its organisation of people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. Its annual staff review of the Deaf Friendly Work Practices Policy indicates that over 90% of permanently employed deaf staff are satisfied with the implementation of this policy.

This action will extend that good practice to ensure that its recruitment policies and processes are applicable to and easily accessible for people with a range of disabilities. It will support people who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing who may have other disabilities. It will support people who are hearing who may have one or more disabilities.

The action will:

- Advertise positions using accessible advertising
- Review recruitment and work related policies to ensure they support people with any type of disability
- Make relevant policies public and accessible on the website
- Modify the annual staff survey to capture feedback from employees with other disability

- Promote the Deaf Society as an employer providing equal opportunity.

Action 3.2 Inform the directions of Disability Employment Services

The Commonwealth Government has extended contracts with non government organisations for Disability Employment Services (DES) to March 2018. The Government is reviewing these services. The Deaf Society has been providing this service for 25 years. In 2013/14 the employment service supported over 200 clients. It has considerable experience and expertise to contribute to the debate regarding the future of these services from 2018.

This action will:

- Form a position regarding options for the future of Disability Employment Services
- Respond to any future Discussion Papers issued by the Commonwealth Government on this issue
- Participate in and contribute to industry discussions on this issue.



FOCUS AREA 4: IMPROVING ACCESS TO MAINTSTREAM SERVICES THROUGH BETTER SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Action 4.1 Collect disability data from staff and students and use it to plan for improved access

It is important that The Deaf Society collects information on disability so that it is best able to support and plan for easy and effective access.

This information will help them monitor if access is improving, and analyse where it should work harder. Disability information is also useful when planning or lobbying with government or other organisations.

The Deaf Society already collects disability information from students so that it can understand their individual needs. This data shows that in 2014/15 there were over 600 students with a disability. However, information on the type of disability and a broader needs analysis is not available.

Data collected from staff is limited to those who are permanently employed and are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing.

This action will:

- Comply with privacy legislation
- Review existing data collection items and practice
- Determine the information to be collected so

that it is in line with other relevant national and state collections

- Determine monitoring and reporting so that the data is used to improve access.

Action 4.2 Strengthen and grow Auslan, note-taking and live captioning capability to meet current and future demand in the disability sector

The provision of Auslan training is core business for the Deaf Society. This action will go beyond this service to build capability to support non-signers and those who are bi-lingual.

It will provide guidance for policy makers, support planners, information linkages and capacity building services and disability service providers about appropriate communication support and the level of accreditation/qualification needed in various situations. It will provide and promote a greater range of support, recognising that people should be able to choose what works best for them. This action is particularly important to better support people in rural and remote areas, and manage demand and choice as this grows with the NDIS.

This action will:

- Promote discussion on and identify career pathways for bilingual support workers
- Identify employment opportunities for those with Auslan skills to the level of Certificate IV in Auslan, but are not yet qualified paraprofessional interpreters or interpreters
- Develop a strategy to increase capacity to provide live captioning and note-takers
- Provide advice to the National Disability Insurance Authority and other relevant organisations.

Action 4.3 Improve access to the Deaf Society website and premises

In keeping with the organisation's focus on supporting people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing, most critical information on the Deaf Society's website is provided in both English and Auslan, and there are a range of contact modes.

Information on the accessibility of premises for those visiting the organisation or attending training is not readily available. Deaf Society premises could be made more inviting for people with a range of access requirements.

This action will:

- Audit the website for accessibility and compliance with W3C standards (World Wide Web Consortium) and usability
- Determine how best practice in providing information via a range of formats – including video clips, captions/subtitles and voice over – will be applied to the Deaf Society website.
- Provide accessibility information on the website in regard to office and training venues, including information on hearing loops, parking, toilet and wheelchair access.
- Provide reception desks that accommodate wheelchair users and others who may want to sit down.

- Determine where hearing loops would improve access, install and provide relevant signage.

Action 4.4 Develop internal guidelines on translation

The Deaf Society is committed to providing information in a range of formats to optimise access. This is particularly evident on the website where information is variously provided in written English, subtitles, captions, video clips, voiceover and Auslan. There is currently no consistent practice or guidance on what is translated or provided in a different format.

This action will:

- Develop internal guidelines and a public statement on what the organisation will translate and where voice over will be provided.
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Action 4.5 Capitalise on technology to provide Auslan interpreting and employment services

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) utilises two-way Video Conferencing technology via a high-speed telephone broadband service to enable a deaf and hearing person to converse. It provides access to a sign language (Auslan or deaf) interpreter when no face-to-face interpreter is available.

Deaf people and service provider organisations in Australia are starting to request on-demand VRI to enable deaf people better and quicker access to services, greater independence and participation in community, workplace, service provision, social and recreation activities. For service providers (government, business and community), it can provide a timely, quality and cost efficient service. It is better able to respond to spontaneous or immediate interpreting needs.

In 2014/15 the Deaf Society provided Skype access for people seeking initial information and advice regarding employment. In addition, it can conduct employment assessments through video conferencing.

However, there are some technology and other barriers to effective use of technology that need to be addressed and/or managed.

This action will:

- Identify critical partners in the development of these guidelines
- Develop guidelines on the use of technology to provide Auslan interpreting services. The

guidelines will focus on the use of technology for people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing, but will also consider the implications for people who have additional disability, such as Autism

- Scope and cost a new service model with on-call interpreters using VRI.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

The development of this plan considered feedback from staff consultations and surveys, consumer surveys, the previous Disability Action Plan 2011-2015 and other relevant information. Our thanks also to the Department of Education and Communities for the funding to develop this DIAP and the Deaf Society management staff and the following stakeholders who helped shape it.

Organisation	Contributor
Deaf Society of NSW	Alistair McEwin (President) Leonie Jackson (CEO) Management Team
Hear for You	David Brady
Ephpheta Centre	David Parker
Disability Trust	Diane Dimovski
Deadly Deaf Mob	Haley Martin
Australian Network on Disability	Jason Barker
Parramatta MP	Julie Owens
Auslan student and parent of a deaf child	Laila Peters
Parents of Deaf Children	Kate Kennedy
Deaf Australia NSW	Luke Watts
Shepherd Centre	Renee Bennett
Job Access	Tania Hillan
Disability Works Australia	Tina Zeleznik
Bradley Reporting	Jason Bradley

Accountability Plan

No.	Action	Indicators	Timeframe
1.1	Support governments and service providers to foster deaf friendly communities and address attitudinal and communication barriers	<p>Range of resources developed and made available to support governments and service providers.</p> <p>Media including print, radio and television targeted to raise awareness.</p> <p>Community events such as the Deaf Festival, National Week of Deaf People, and Hearing Awareness Week leveraged.</p> <p>Strategy to target employers and businesses approved by CEO.</p>	Project Plan completed by June 2016
1.2	Improve Deaf Society responsiveness to the range of disabilities	<p>Statement of responsibility is included in staff position descriptions and work agreements.</p> <p>Copy of this DIAP provided to all existing staff, and included in orientation for new staff.</p> <p>Employee nominated to respond to support other staff respond to the needs of people with disability.</p> <p>Staff provided with information on range of disabilities.</p>	June 2016
2.1	Explore the feasibility of a targeted geographic and/or business segment pilot that fosters deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing friendly communities	<p>Pilots are scoped and costed.</p> <p>Funding source identified.</p> <p>Project implementation plan developed if approved by Board.</p>	June 2016
2.2	Increase social networking opportunities for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing, and their families	<p>Existing social networking opportunities and gaps mapped</p> <p>Networking strategy developed and costed</p>	January 2017

3.1	Review the Deaf Society's recruitment practice to ensure policies and process support access for people with any disability	<p>All new positions advertised using accessible advertising.</p> <p>Recruitment and work related policies reviewed to ensure they support people with any type of disability.</p> <p>Relevant policies are made public and accessible on website.</p> <p>Staff annual survey captures feedback from employees with other types of disability.</p> <p>The Deaf Society is promoted as being an employer providing equal opportunity.</p>	June 2017
3.2	Inform the directions of Disability Employment Services	<p>Position documented and presented to the Board regarding Disability Employment Services.</p> <p>Response provided to any future Discussion Papers issued by the Commonwealth Government on this issue.</p>	Bi-annually commencing June 2016
4.1	Collect disability data from staff and students and use it to plan for improved access	<p>Existing data collection items and practice reviewed.</p> <p>Disability information to be collected is determined.</p> <p>Monitoring and reporting requirements are documented so that the disability data is used to improve access.</p> <p>Note: This action will comply with privacy legislation.</p>	June 2017
4.2	Strengthen and grow Auslan, note-taking and live captioning capability to meet current and future demand in the disability sector	<p>Employment opportunities scoped for those with Auslan skills to the level of Certificate IV in Auslan, but are not yet qualified paraprofessional interpreters or interpreters identified.</p> <p>Strategy to provide and market the full range of communication support, including notetakers, live captioning approved by CEO,</p> <p>Advice provided to the National Disability Insurance Authority and other relevant organisations.</p>	January 2018

4.3	Improve access to The Deaf Society website, and access information	<p>Website audited and updated for compliance with W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) and application of best practice.</p> <p>Accessibility information is provided on the website in regard to office and training venues, including information on parking, toilet and wheelchair access.</p>	January 2018
4.4	Develop internal guidelines on translation	Internal guidelines and a public statement on what the organisation will translate and where voice over will be used to be approved by the CEO.	January 2016
4.5	Capitalise on the use of technology to provide Auslan interpreting and employment services	<p>Guidelines on the use of technology to provide Auslan interpreting services informed by critical stakeholder input and approved by CEO.</p> <p>Guidelines provided to key stakeholders and available on the website.</p>	January 2017

For more information on this Plan or to provide feedback please contact the Director, Growth and Development

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