

Submission to the National Arts and Disability Strategy consultation 2018 – Anonymous

Dear cultural ministers, here are some things I would like you to consider when planning for inclusion.

I am a hearing person who works as a notetaker, communication aide, and disability support worker. I have had an involvement with the Deaf community for many years, and access for Deaf people is very important to me.

Deaf Access to Cinema

Since getting together with my Deaf girlfriend I have realised how difficult it is to just go and see a movie. Before I was an avid movie goer but now don't go as much as I don't want her to miss out and there are so many movies she can't access, especially at the alternative cinemas who have never even heard of Capti View let alone tried to start the process within their business of training staff to use the machine, reminding them to charge it and dealing with the faults that occur as you are using it (usually at the start of the movie so that you miss most of the start and annoy other movie goers by huddling around it in the dark trying to reset it etc..)

CaptiView is flawed for so many reasons – please refer to Deaf Artist and Activist Asphyxia's blog where she accurately and clearly summarises the many difficulties with this device.

<https://helloasphyxia.wordpress.com/2016/01/20/its-time-for-open-captions-real-access-to-movies-for-deaf-people-2/>

However recently I went to an alternative cinema who did not have CaptiView to ask if they could switch on the subtitles if my girlfriend came to see the movie.

Ninety percent of movies are now made with subtitles, they come pre made with the movie, so all the cinema needs to do is switch them on for that particular screening.

The owner of that cinema, after checking with the projectionist about how to turn them on, got back to me and said she could, and to just let the staff know when we arrived to buy tickets that we would like the subtitles to be switched on.

This seems like a great solution to an ongoing problem with Access to movies for the Deaf. If the government could make a rule that Cinemas switch on Subtitles if a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person makes a request to do so when buying tickets (naturally their request would need to be timely and not minutes before the start of the movie). It would be good to also have a rule that cinemas can only buy movies where the subtitle file is provided – this will encourage movie-makers to think about access.

Promoting Awareness for Inclusion

Government could fund an arts initiative for Deaf actors and producers to collaborate with the ABC to produce a drama mini series showcasing the lives of some deaf characters and the barriers they face in everyday life. In the same style as the L-Word, where you have a minority group within a community playing out their unique challenges within the general population. This would be a powerful way for everyday Australians to gain insights into the fascinating world of Deaf culture and

its diverse components. And of course Auslan is one such compelling component that I feel Australians are already fascinated by.

Insights created by such a series would influence inclusion in unexpected ways that merely creating laws around inclusion would not, as a deeper understanding of the challenges would have been conveyed in an entertaining way.

When you inspire people, they become enthusiastic and active in their participation and I believe this is what changes attitudes most effectively.

Deaf Access to Public Events

Deaf access to public events that have an art focus requires an Auslan interpreter to be present, or live captioning (which provides wider access as not all deaf people can sign).

Organisations are often put off if they book an interpreter and then no Deaf people turn up to the event and so don't book them for the following year.

It takes time for the Deaf to realise they will be catered for by an interpreter being present, so often Deaf do not come to events because they assume they won't have access.

If the government made a rule for all public events to be accessible to the Deaf by making an interpreter/captioner presence a compulsory component of all public events, then this would go a long way in normalising the inclusion. Also public events such as the writers festivals in Sydney and Melbourne often film their speakers which Deaf people may try to access later via You-tube and if it has been interpreted they can still access the event in this way.

Government Collaboration with ASLIA

As it stands the Organisation that makes the rules for the professional conduct of interpreters in Australia (ASLIA) do not have a recommendation that interpreters interpret even if there think no Deaf people have turned up to the event.

I recently attended a festival where an interpreter had been booked for some poetry readings.

The interpreter could not see any deaf people in the audience and so did not stand up and interpret. My girlfriend reports times when people did not know she was deaf and so did not interpret, and she felt to uncomfortable to go up and tell them she was deaf and ask them to interpret. It would be better if they simply interpreted as they were booked to do.

I believe that having the interpreter there doing their job even if there are no Deaf people present sends a message of inclusion and promotes awareness around the importance we as a community are placing around inclusion. This message is for the broader community to absorb and does not rely on Deaf people being present.

Not only that, Auslan is in my opinion a national treasure and needs to be presented like a jewel in our crown at every opportunity. Auslan is a cultural phenomenon in itself and its theatrical nature always enhances any arts event that it is present at, as well as sending a message that we as a people are inclusive and that it MATTERS.

For this reason, I believe it would be a very constructive move on the part of the government to work with ASLIA to make this code of conduct happen ie that Interpreters should interpret even if they think no deaf people have turned up to an event)

Regards,

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