

‘When cries for help fall on deaf ears: Participation of Deaf People in the Health Care System’

**Teresa Paulet, Gippsland Auslan Interpreter Service (GAIS) &
Leanne Wishart, deaf access VICTORIA Gippsland (daV)**



A0030829F



The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992

It is unlawful for a person who provides goods or services to discriminate against another person on the ground of the other person's disability...

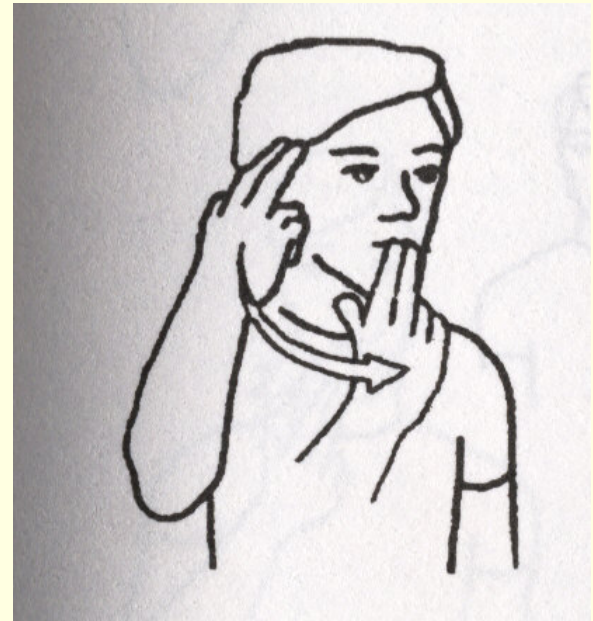


A0030829F



What is Deafness?

- Is not visible or obvious
- Often over-looked
- Is deafness a disability?
- Where does the handicap lie?



Participation

“...without Deaf input, disability activists will overlook deaf access, or worse, will make very simple assumptions. [We need] deaf participation”.

Michael Uniacke, Victorian Disability Advisory Council
(Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity
Commission)



A0030829F



Language

- First Language = Auslan
- Second Language = English
- Born Deaf = decreased access to English Language
- Auslan has it's own grammar and syntax
- Auslan - recognised by Government as a community language

Case Study

Lip Reading and Writing Notes



Communication

- Qualified Auslan Interpreters
- Access to interpreters in Gippsland, Victoria

	Number of Interpreters	Number of Signing Deaf	Ratio of Signing Deaf : Number or Interpreters	Area Square Km
Gippsland	* 1	80	1:80	78,000
Melbourne	89	5,000	1:56	5,000

**Please Note:*

- *The one paraprofessional interpreter in Gippsland currently works full-time in another profession and has very limited availability.*
- *Many interpreting assignments require two interpreters to comply with OH&S regulations.*



Impact on Gippsland Region

Comments that were made by Deaf community members during a research undertaken by Julie McInnes, deaf access VICTORIA in 2004 included:

- *“I can’t get one anyway, why bother”*
- *“I don’t want to be a bother to the service I need to use”*
- *“It’s too expensive for them (service) and me”*
- *“It’s too hard”*



Case Study

The Hospital Setting

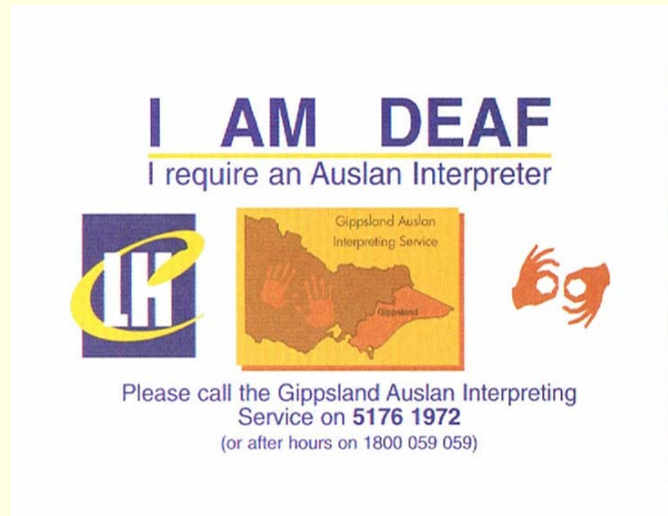


Gippsland Auslan Interpreter Service (GAIS)

- Auspiced by LCHS 2005
- Provides a locally based interpreting service
- Community Development role
- *Recent survey indicated that **95%** of people who are deaf or hard of hearing surveyed in Gippsland would engage an interpreter for health related appointments.*



Case Study - Business Card



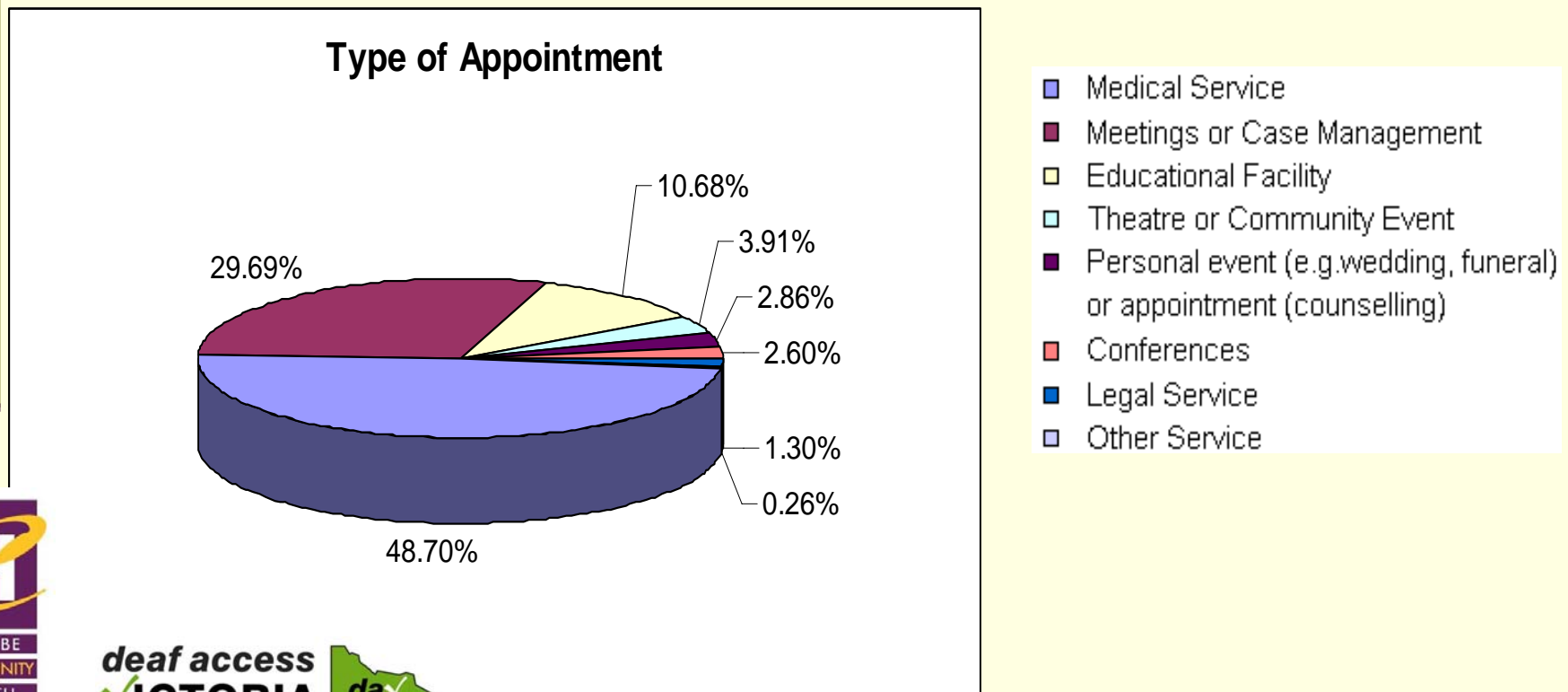
Gippsland Deafness Expo 2007

- Awareness raising around the importance and need for Auslan Interpreters
- Service Providers and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities to come together
- Launch Information Pack including an informative DVD aimed at both service providers and the deaf community

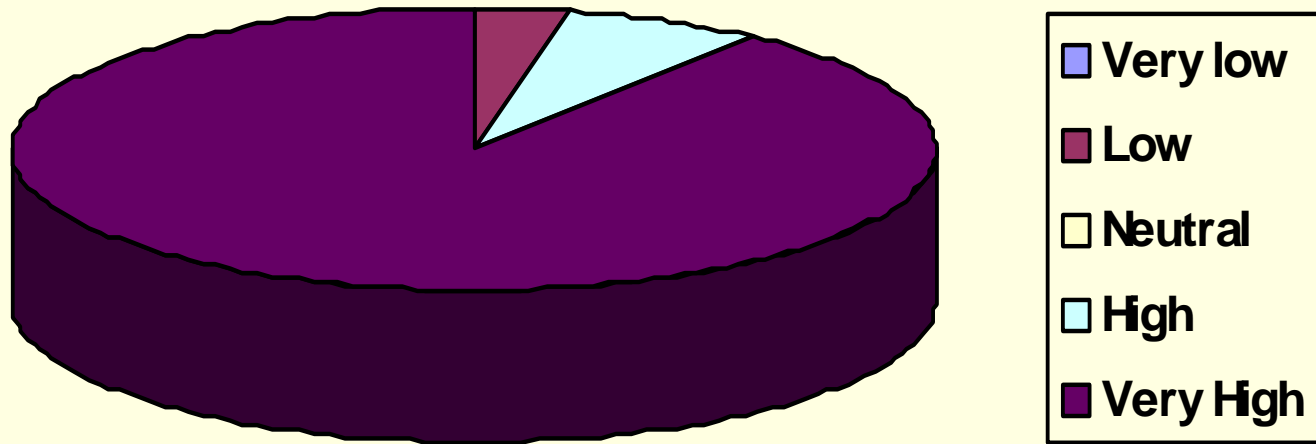


GAIS Service Provider / Client Usage

Type of Appointment (Statistics from start of service 11th April'05 to 31st Dec'06)



Perceived need for a permanent Gippsland Interpreter: Service Providers (statistics taken from the GAIS evaluation 2006)



Service Provider Responses

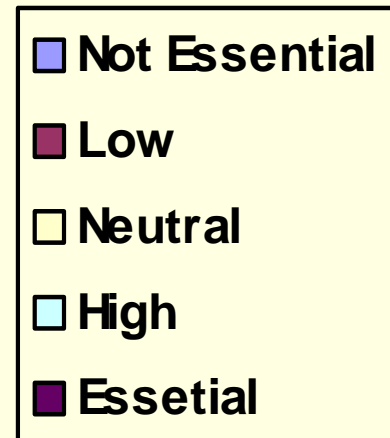
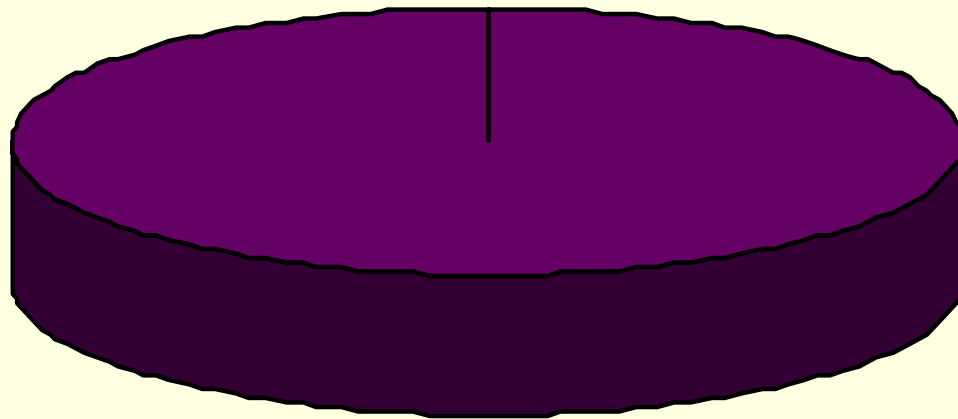
Q14: What difference did it mean having the Interpreter present at the appointments?

(statistics taken from the GAIS evaluation 2006)

- **“Much greater clarity concerning issues discussed with patient.”**
- **“A better service for the patient.”**
- **“Able to communicate much more effectively with the patient. Clarification; decreased consultation time. Improved effectiveness of consultation and advice.”**
- **“Made it an effective appointment and cut out a lot of frustration for myself, client and family. Much better understanding of the clients needs and concerns so more effective healthcare and education could be provided.”**
- **“Without the Interpreter, my assessment of the patient could not have taken place and therefore the patient would have not been involved in the necessary team care arrangement that was provided.”**
- **** “Made the appointment difficult and hard to work.” ****

Perceived need for a permanent Gippsland Interpreter: Deaf Community

(Statistics taken from the GAIS evaluation 2006)



Client Responses

Q13: What difference did it mean having the Interpreter present at the appointments?

(Statistics taken from the GAIS evaluation 2006)

- *“I’m sure you know the difference. Being able to access to all communications in the room and understand spoken conversations so I can participate.”*
- *“Interpreters are important to ensure that the information exchanged between hearing and deaf persons are clearly understood and expressed without discrimination.”*
- *“Imagine you are in a foreign country and you can’t talk to anyone. That’s how I feel without an Interpreter.”*
- *“To read lips and write things down was not good in the past. I have had important messages misunderstood. It’s better now.”*
- *“Before I was not able to explain and had to write everything down – I’m not good with words.”*
- *“Wonderful – it means communication and messages getting across – feel great both use have equal understanding.”*

Mental Health Services

- An example:

A person came into a service extremely distressed and the staff became so distressed at not being able to understand the client that this exacerbated the stress for the client even further, making the situation almost an impossible one.
- Like all people when stressed or in crisis, communication becomes stressed and there is greater difficulty understanding the person. This is also true for Deaf and Hard of Hearing clients whose signing may become a little incoherent and more difficult to read. In such instances it is important to access the skills of a relay interpreter (deaf person) who can interpret the signs to an Auslan Interpreter who works with the service provider/counsellor/psychiatrist. Interpreting in the Mental Health sector is a specialised role, and requires a professional interpreter as opposed to a paraprofessional interpreter.



Real Participation in Health Service...

*“**Wonderful** – it means communication and messages getting across – feel great both use have **equal understanding.**”*

