

Dear Sir Madam,

My name is Kaye Scott and I am the current Chairperson of the The National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf (NAATD). The NAATD committee comprises two representatives from each state and territory association of teachers of the deaf, and provides leadership, direction and understanding between members of the teaching and other professions throughout Australia in relation to the education of children and students who are deaf. In this document the term “deaf” covers the full range of hearing loss to be found in the population.

It is essential that all children are provided with an education. Section 27A of the Human Rights Act 2004 says that: **Every child has the right to have access to free, school education appropriate to his or her needs.** For those children with a hearing loss, it is vital that the appropriate support structures and accommodations are provided to allow the child to maximise their educational potential. In accordance with the Human Rights Act (2004) DFAT has an imperative in the new International Development Policy to uphold the principles of the Act and support the development of the regions capacity to provide education for all children including those who are deaf.

The NAATD committee believes that DFAT should prioritise the programs and activities in our region which support education and social inclusion of children who are deaf.

Please find following a response to some of the key questions raised in the submission guidelines.

***What key trends or challenges will shape Australia's engagement in our region and globally over the next five to 10 years? What risks and opportunities does this present for Australia's development assistance?***

In Australia all states and territories provide universal neonatal hearing screening. Each year in Australia approximately 551 children are born with moderate to profound permanent childhood hearing impairment (PCHI) (MSAC 2007). Universal neonatal hearing screening aims to identify those children born with moderate to profound PCHI and provide them and their families with access to appropriate intervention in order to minimise the impact of their hearing impairment. The provision of early amplification and access to early intervention programs provides DHH children access to support for developing, assessing and monitoring of. language skills, cognitive skills, auditory skills, speech, vocabulary, and social emotional development.

In the Asia Pacific region there are many countries which do not provide universal neonatal hearing screening. The ongoing societal and economic cost should be an

important consideration in providing support for neonatal hearing screening, appropriate hearing technology provision and the development of an appropriate skilled workforce with specialist skills to support, this vulnerable group. An analysis by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2017) suggests "...that the annual cost of unaddressed hearing loss is in the range \$750–790 billion globally"(pg. vii).

Additionally WHO suggest:

- Overall, early identification of hearing loss through screening of newborns, school children and adults over 50 years of age is found to be cost-effective.
- Use of hearing aids is shown to be cost-effective, especially if use is continuous and accompanied by audiological rehabilitation. (

Audiological rehabilitation generally includes support from Teachers of the Deaf (ToD).

The provision of neonatal screening is complex but the expertise of specialist teachers of the deaf (ToD) in the process is essential.

It is the belief of NAATD that:

- Following diagnosis of hearing loss, it is essential that parents are provided with a range of service options and support agencies.
- Families should be provided with comprehensive and non-biased advice on language and communication options and the range of services and support agencies.
- It is essential that a Teacher of the Deaf is involved as a member of the early intervention team when a child is first diagnosed with a hearing loss.
- It is essential for children that intervention commences as soon as possible after diagnosis.
- Early intervention plans and programs will be family centred and involve a Teacher of the Deaf.
- Quality early intervention plans and programs will be available to all children and their families irrespective of their geographic location, additional needs, socio-economic status and cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

NAATD believes that these rights should be afforded to all deaf children not only in the Asia Pacific region but worldwide.

### ***What development capabilities will Australia need to respond to these challenges?***

Provision of suitably trained professionals to implement, track and monitor the provision of services to deaf children.

***How can Australia best utilise its national strengths to enhance the impact of our development program and address multidimensional vulnerabilities?***

Australian processes for universal neonatal hearing screening are held in high regard worldwide and provide a starting blueprint for building similar culturally appropriate services outside of Australia.

The universal provision of hearing assistive technology (HAT) throughout Australia by Hearing Australia is of the highest standard and provides a blueprint for development. The provision of equipment should take into consideration the following NAATD beliefs:

- It is the right of individuals, families and caregivers to make fully informed choices about audiological and/or assistive listening device management.
- It is the right of the individuals, families and caregivers to access appropriate amplification and assistive listening devices and timely services in consultation with paediatric audiologists and other professionals.

The provision of teachers of the deaf should take into consideration the following NAATD beliefs:

- All deaf children and students have the right to access education and support from Teachers of the Deaf who have the specialist training required to meet the Teacher of the Deaf Elaborations to the Australian Teaching and School Leadership Standards for Teachers.
- Educational providers must employ qualified Teachers of the Deaf and ensure their ongoing professional development.
- All children and students have the right to assistance to develop their first language which may be English, Auslan or any other language.
- Children and students who have additional needs have the right to receive equitable access to specialist support services. Children and students are not to be discriminated against when ascertaining the need for additional services: irrespective of cost, enrolment and/ or degree of hearing loss.

***How should the new policy reflect the Government's commitments to build stronger and more meaningful partnerships in our region, founded on mutual trust and respect and shared values of fairness and equality?***

Section 27A of the Human Rights Act 2004 says that: **Every child has the right to have access to free, school education appropriate to his or her needs.** For those children with a hearing loss, it is vital that the appropriate support structures and accommodations are provided to allow the child to maximise their educational potential.

Additionally, the principle of “nothing about us without us” should be the mantra of DFAT. It is important the cultural sensitivities be understood and that in all cases

appropriate personal from countries or regions involved should be part of any decision making process.

***What lessons from Australia's past development efforts should inform the policy? What is Australia seen to be doing comparatively well?***

The committee has no comment to make on the first part of the statement. Australia has an excellent track record in the provision of universal neonatal hearing screening and the provision of HAT through Hearing Australia. Support for deaf children is provided on a state or territory basis and universally ToD's provide exceptional educational support to enhance the academic achievements and social cognitive learning of students.

***How should the performance and delivery systems be designed to promote transparency and accountability, as well as effectiveness and learning in Australia's development assistance?***

The establishment of well-developed Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) which include cultural and social expectations will promote accountability. The outcomes of all KPI's should be published regularly on the DFAT website.

***How should the new policy address the role of ODA and non-ODA in supporting the development of our regional partners?***

The policy should outline the importance of collaboration and avoiding duplication of programs between the two agencies.

Sincerely,

Kaye Scott PhD



*National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf*  
Chairperson

## **References**

Global costs of unaddressed hearing loss and cost-effectiveness of interventions: a WHO report, 2017. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/254659/9789241512046-eng.pdf>

MSAC (Medical Services Advisory Committee) 2007. Universal neonatal hearing screening: assessment report. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.  
NAATD Policy Statements