



# Parent Council for Deaf Education

PO Box 4748, NORTH ROCKS NSW 2151

Ph: 02 9871 3049 TTY 02 9871 3026

Fax: 02 9871 3193

[www.pcde.org](http://www.pcde.org)

ABN: 47 618 685 904

6th April 2011

## Review of Disability Standards for Education 2005

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Review of Disability Standards for Education 2005. Attached please find our joint submission.

Parent Council for Deaf Education is the peak body for parents of deaf and hearing impaired children in New South Wales.

Aussie Deaf Kids provides online information and support to families with a deaf or hearing impaired child across Australia.

Yours sincerely,

---

Kate Kennedy  
Coordinator of Information and Advocacy  
Parent Council for Deaf Education  
PO BOX 4748  
North Rocks NSW 2151  
Phone: 02 9871 3049  
Email: [kate@pcde.org](mailto:kate@pcde.org)

---

Ann Porter  
CEO  
Aussie Deaf Kids  
35 Wharf 8  
56a Pirrama Road  
Pymont NSW 2009  
Phone: 02 9566 4060  
Email: [ann.porter@aussiedeafkids.org.au](mailto:ann.porter@aussiedeafkids.org.au)



## **Review of Disability Standards for Education 2005**

### **Submission form**

For electronic copies of the submission forms visit: [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au)

Submissions can be emailed to [standardsreview@deewr.gov.au](mailto:standardsreview@deewr.gov.au) or faxed to 02 6121 3363 until **5pm Thursday 31 March 2011**.

There are two sets of questions. One set of questions is targeted at 'users' and the other set is targeted at 'providers' of education and training.

### **Questions for users of education and training**

In order to provide context for your comments please indicate whether you are a:

- Student/prospective student
- Carer or family member of student with disability
- Advocate
- Peak/community organisation
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

You may answer all or some of the questions.

## **Question 1 Providing clarity**

Are the Standards easy to understand or are there parts that require clarification?

The Standards document has been a useful tool for parents and education providers alike. We feel, however, there here needs to be clarity around the term “reasonable adjustments” as the interpretations by different education providers about what this means, can be disparate and inconsistent in relation to deaf and hearing impaired students. Students with similar learning needs receive different levels of support across State jurisdictions, which are inequitable.

It would be good to have some clarity around who makes the judgments about what constitutes “reasonable adjustments”. The type and level of support a student receives is very much dependent on the state where they live and whether they live in a metropolitan, regional or remote area. All students deserve access to appropriate support services, irrespective of their geographic location.

Parents are also concerned about timeliness of support provided when a student has a deteriorating hearing loss.

## **Question 2 Rights under the Standards**

Are you aware of your rights to enrol, access support and participate in education and training?

1. From a parent’s perspective, the current format of the document is somewhat daunting for families to read and understand. We would recommend that the standards be made available in a briefer “parent friendly” format.
2. We would also recommend that education providers be required to provide a copy of this “parent friendly” Standards document to parents upon enrolment.

Parents of deaf and hearing impaired children appear to be particularly unaware of the existence of the Standards and, in fact, their rights under the law. Data from a parent survey in 2010 indicated that only 12.4% of Australian parents of deaf children who responded to the survey, reported having received information about parents’ rights under the law.

### **Question 3 Access to education and training opportunities**

Have you or a person you know with disability, experienced difficulties enrolling in an educational institution or participating in educational activities on the same basis as people without disability? If so, why do you think this occurred?

1. The Standards have increased awareness of the rights of people with a disability to access education and training. However, we feel that standards do not provide clarity around the competencies of professionals providing access and support services to students. Appropriately qualified professionals, including Teachers of the Deaf, Auslan interpreters and notetakers, are crucial to deaf and hearing impaired students' ability to access the curriculum and achieve appropriate educational outcomes.

We are increasingly concerned with Education Department policies that are reducing not only access to support services for these students and but also the competency levels of the professionals providing support services. This is contrary to international trends in the education of deaf and hearing impaired students where increasing levels of support are being provided to these students so the gains made by improved technology can be fully realised.

2. We believe that there needs to be a clear, escalating pathway for dealing with complaints. In our experience, parents tend to be ill equipped or reluctant to make a complaint, particularly to the level of the Australian Human Rights Commission. It is not clear what interim steps parents can take when they feel their child has been affected by a breach of the Standards. We would recommend that additional, practical information for families be made available to assist them.

### **Question 4 Eliminating discrimination**

Describe any instances where the introduction of the Standards played a part in eliminating discrimination experienced by a person with disability in an educational setting?.

The level of publicity regarding bullying in schools and policies for school to prevent bullying have improved parents awareness of the rights of their child to attend school free of harassment and bullying.

### **Question 5 Awareness and recognition**

Do you think the Standards have raised awareness and increased understanding of the issues affecting people with disability and their rights to access and participate in education and training?

See response to Question 2.

## **Question 6 Compatibility with current education system**

Are there any current education or training issues that are not covered by the Standards but should be?

Changing technology in the classroom with the introduction of interactive whiteboards, increasing use of DVDs, television programs and other multimedia have disadvantaged deaf and hearing impaired students. When new technology is introduced into the classroom we believe there should be a requirement for the education facility to ensure that the technology is compatible with the student's assistive listening devices, such as FMs. In our view, compatible classroom technology and access to captions should be mandatory and not subject to "reasonable adjustment".