



Deafness Association of the Northern Territory Inc.

ABN 58 759 819 641

Incorporating Deaf Children's Association NT, Better Hearing Australia (Darwin Group) & NT Tinnitus Group

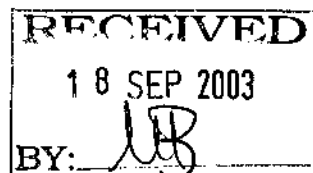
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18th September 2003

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Consultation on the Definition of a Charity
The Board of Taxation
c/- The Treasury
Langton Crescent
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Sirs,

SUBMISSION ON THE DEFINITION OF A CHARITY CHARITIES BILL 2003

As requested I am making a submission on behalf of our Association regarding our Charitable status as we are in a unique position in the NT by reason of our demographic situation. We are the only non-Govt organisation dealing with hearing loss in the Northern Territory to cover a huge area with the prevalence of deafness far higher here than anywhere else in Australia. It is generally assumed that in developed countries the incidence of hearing loss in the population is one in seven, but in the Territory it is one in three by reason of the endemic middle ear infection in our Aboriginal people comprising over 27% of our population.

We are funded 3/4 by the NT Dept of Health & Community Services (DHCS) and 1/4 from the Commonwealth State & Disability Agreement (CSDA). Several years ago CSDA required us to fill in an annual "Snapshot Day" Census form showing client delivery of our services. The graph of the published results from all NGOs as a result of this data collection showed quite erroneously that the number of people suffering from autism in the NT far exceeded the number of people suffering from hearing loss. This was obviously an impossibility in the light of the statistics gathered by reputable bodies such as Australian Hearing and the Menzies School of Health that in the Territory approximately one in three people suffer from hearing loss for the reason given above. On behalf of our Association I wrote to the Department pointing out the clear impossibility of the statistics gathered by this method. Because of the paucity of our funding we can only employ a person on a part-time basis and certainly cannot afford to travel round the huge area of the Northern Territory visiting remote communities to deliver direct services. What we can and do, however, is lobby on their behalf for employing specialist teachers and better facilities for profoundly and severely deaf children, also for providing special assistive listening devices in remote area schools for Aboriginal pupils, half of whom have a significant hearing loss by reason of middle ear infection. We also lobby for the provision of specialist Ear Nose & Throat medical personnel.

Our argument was accepted by the Department and we were no longer required to fill in the "Snapshot Day" Census form. What does concern us at the moment is the possibility that because we achieved exemption from this duty by reason of the acceptance that a good deal of our work consists of lobbying on behalf of our clients, this might militate against us under the proposed new tax legislation. Our Association's activities do extend beyond lobbying: we provide information, educate and raise awareness of hearing loss, as well as programs to prevent deafblindness and brain damage as a result of the rubella virus in pregnant women, especially those from non-English backgrounds.

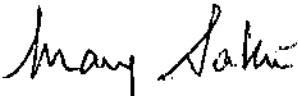
We have distributed videos in 12 South East Asian, African and Middle East languages among migrants throughout Australia and have succeeded in reducing the amount of susceptibility to rubella among non-English speaking migrants by approximately 50%. When one considers that each child born deafblind through rubella costs the community an extra three million dollars to raise, and a child born deaf costs \$250,000 extra, it will be seen that our activities have proved extremely valuable to the country at large, as well as preventing profound trauma to newly-settled families. We have also produced an Emergency Communication booklet for medical and rescue personnel showing in easily read pictograms how to communicate with deaf people in emergencies. 5000 copies of this booklet have been distributed free throughout Australia and it is very much appreciated. Quota International Queensland basing their "Quota Cares" campaign this year on the booklet.

From this it will be seen that our activities extend well beyond lobbying. We also provide information to deaf and hearing people on the problems arising from hearing loss, and during Hearing Awareness and Disabilities Week raise awareness among the general public of what deafness means. We have a tinnitus group and visit schools and Youth groups speaking about hearing loss. We have recently provided a Sound Field system for USA in Darwin to enable older people to hear their lectures more easily, part reason for this being to demonstrate how valuable these Assistive Listening Devices are when set up in remote area schools for indigenous deaf children.

All of the Association's activities, including its lobbying, should be seen as direct service delivery to members of the community. All activities are undertaken to meet our voluntarily assumed obligation towards the wellbeing of all members of the community which are affected by deafness and to help prevent other members of the community from becoming deaf. None of its activities are done for the benefit of the Association itself, but for the benefit of members of the community.

A further concern is that should we lose our charitable status because of our lobbying it will without doubt prove impossible to reinstate it. We are very poorly funded by government, and a considerable amount of our support comes from donations from people who receive a tax concession. It would be quite impossible to carry on without public donations as can be seen from the accreditations on our Rubella Awareness and Emergency Booklet programs, and this would result in loss financially and in other ways to the Australian community at large. I personally have been made a Member of the Order of Australia for my voluntary work over 14 years on these programs, which is an excellent indication of their value. It would be a tragedy if our Association could no longer continue because its Charitable status is removed.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Salter AM
President