



**Media Release
20 April 2010**

Deaf people to get SMS emergency service

Deaf Australia is delighted with today's announcement that the Australian Government will establish an SMS emergency service for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

The move was announced by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy in an address to the CommsDay Summit in Sydney.

The announcement follows a feasibility study into the provision of an SMS emergency service, conducted by ACMA in 2009.

Deaf Australia has been advocating for an SMS emergency service for a number of years. Following a forum and roundtable discussion on access to emergency services hosted by Deaf Australia in 2008, where it was agreed that "something is better than nothing" ACMA agreed to conduct the feasibility study.

"We are absolutely delighted with this news. Finally Deaf and hard of hearing people will be able to feel more safe when they go out into the community because they will be able to call emergency services if they need them," said Deaf Australia President Kyle Miers.

Deaf Australia congratulates the Minister on this progressive step forward for equal access for Deaf and hard of hearing people.

Currently Deaf and hard of hearing people are only able to access emergency services by using a TTY (telephone typewriter) or computer modem and calling the National Relay Services on the dedicated 106 emergency number. TTYs are not portable, so when a Deaf or hard of hearing person leaves their home or workplace they have no access to emergency services.

With the establishment of an SMS emergency service Deaf and hard of hearing people will finally have access to emergency services regardless of where they are.

Deaf Australia also congratulates the Minister on his announcement that the Government will consult on improvements to the National Relay Service (NRS). Deaf Australia will continue to advocate for a Video Relay Service to be included in the NRS.

The Minister's speech is at <http://www.minister.dbcde.gov.au/media/speeches/2010/006>

About Deaf Australia:

Deaf Australia is the only leading national peak body for deaf people managed for and by deaf people. We represent, promote and preserve the Australian Deaf community and its language and culture. We provide an advocacy and information service for and about deaf people. We work with the deaf community and stakeholders in the best interest of deaf people.

Deaf Australia (established in 1986) is the Australian national member of the World Federation of the Deaf, is a founding member of Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), and works cooperatively with many organisations to achieve a better quality of life for deaf people.

Deaf Australia is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Further information:

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