



Service Access at Telecommunications Retail Service Centres Discussion Paper

This discussion paper looks at what types of support Deaf people need to obtain equal service at a telecommunications retail service centre (RSC). The Australian Association of the Deaf (AAD) through its Deaf Telecommunication Access and Networking Project (DTAN) is aware that many people experience difficulty in getting a good level of service when they visit an RSC.



A RSC means a Telstra Shop or Optus Retail Centre. These shops provide products such as mobile phones, disability equipment and other technical devices that may benefit people to obtain access to telecommunications.

RSC's provide direct customer service to the public, which includes Deaf people. During the National Community Consultation workshops conducted around Australia in 2001/2002 and the feedback received from the discussion papers sent out to AAD's members, we think that the most important issues are those outlined below:

a) Communication with Customer Service Staff

Many Deaf people avoid dealing directly with customer service staff unless it is absolutely necessary (eg connecting a TTY line in their home or purchasing a mobile phone). Many people report that obtaining accurate information is a frustrating experience and a time consuming task.



For example, a Deaf person visits the RSC to obtain information about different models of TTYs. This Deaf person wants to rent a TTY through the Disability Equipment Program but is unsure which TTY model suits him. The customer service officer begins talking about all the different models available. The Deaf person is unable to lipread her and requests that she write down what she is saying.

The Customer Service officer continues to talk loudly and makes no attempt to write down the information. The Deaf person is left frustrated and quickly loses confidence and is unable to obtain the information he requires.

Questions:

- a) *Has this happened to you?*
- b) *Do you prefer to communicate with a customer service officer by writing?*
- c) *Would you like to have an Auslan Interpreter when you visit an RSC?*
- d) *Would you go to an RSC that employs a Deaf person who can communicate in Auslan?*
- e) *What other ways can Telstra and Optus make their shops more accessible to you?*

b) Demonstration of equipment

One of the advantages of going to a retail store is to get an idea of the type of equipment available and discuss issues with customer service staff.



If a Deaf person visits an RSC they often need to be shown how some of the equipment works. This is one way of making sure it is accessible for them before they buy. For example, if a Deaf person wants to purchase a mobile phone with SMS text feature, that person may want to try to phone to make sure the features are active and understand how they work.

AAD has received reports from Deaf people who have purchased a mobile phone from an RSC after being advised that it had SMS features. Later after playing with the handset, they realised that their phone did not have SMS and they were stuck with a phone that they could not use.

Questions:

- a) *Would you like to see how equipment works before purchasing it?*
- b) *Have you been sold some equipment only to later find out it was not suitable?*

c) Provision of Auslan Interpreter

To get equal access to information, Deaf people prefer the services of an Auslan Interpreter.



Today, Deaf people access interpreters for a wide range of services; however the ongoing issue is who pays the interpreter for their work. Traditionally, the service agency that wants to communicate with the Deaf person covers the costs to enable equal access for Deaf people. If the RSC is unwilling to pay for an Auslan interpreter,

the Deaf person is left with no choice but to either pay for the interpreter themselves or find another way to access the same service.

Questions:

a) *What situations would you like to have an Auslan Interpreter at an RSC? Please circulate 1-4 with number 1 showing which one is most important to you.*

- 1) *Making enquiries about equipment*
- 2) *Purchasing equipment*
- 3) *Signing an agreement with the company*
- 4) *Signing a mobile phone contract*

d) Hearing Loops



Some Deaf people rely on hearing aids to assist them with lipreading or understanding conversation. One way to overcome this is to use a 'hearing loop' which will cut out the background noise. This will enable the Deaf person to have a clear conversation with someone without the interference of noise.

Many Government organisations such as the NSW State Railways provide hearing loops in their ticketing offices or other service centres. AAD believes this needs to be extended to all telecommunications service and retail centres to ensure equal access.

Questions:

- a) *Do you use a hearing aid?*
- b) *Will you benefit from a 'hearing loop'?*

e) Accessibility of written information

The way in which this information is provided is often inaccessible to Deaf people because the information may be:

- ◆ Difficult to read
- ◆ Is not relevant to Deaf people
- ◆ Is not visible in the RSC
- ◆ Too detailed without any diagrams, picture or graphics
- ◆ Not in Auslan video format
- ◆ May not provide a TTY contact number for further information

Ideally, AAD would like to see companies developing videos which explain products and services in Auslan or with closed captions to ensure Deaf people are able to access information easily, quickly and in their preferred language. This is the

equivalent of printed material being provided in other language for people from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB).

In Australia, Telstra produced a video “No worries, No hassles” providing Deaf people with information about its Disability Equipment Program. This video is still available and is provided free of charge to people who request it.

AAD believes that the production of videos in Auslan, is a vital way of providing important information to Deaf people and this method is becoming increasingly popular internationally.

Questions:

- a) Would you like to see more graphics/pictures on printed material?
- b) Do you have difficulty understanding printed brochures that have a lot of text?
- c) Have you seen the video “No worries, No hassles”?
- d) What types of information do you think should be provided in Auslan video format?

Comments and feedback

AAD looks forward to your comments on this paper. As you can see it addresses many issues. We may have missed some, so please tell us your ideas, concerns and thoughts.

The deadline for feedback is Friday 20th December 2002

If you wish to provide feedback or ask questions, you can do one or all of the following:

1. Contact Cathy Clark cathy.clark@aad.org.au
2. Visit AAD’s website, check into DTAN discussion site and type your comments.
www.aad.org.au

We look forward to receiving your comments and feedback.

After receiving feedback from the community, we will share your comments with the government, telecommunications industry, mobile phone providers, community services and the other members of the Deaf community.

Cathy Clark
DTAN Project

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