



**Media Release
17 July 2010**

Big step forward for cinema access

Deaf Australia is delighted with today's announcement of a new plan to make the major cinema chains accessible for Deaf and hard of hearing people and blind and vision impaired people.

The plan to introduce captioning and audio description into every one of the 132 cinema complexes run by the four major cinema chains (Village, Hoyts, Event Cinemas and Reading) was announced by the Hon. Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, at a launch function in Sydney today.

The launch of this plan comes after ten long years of lobbying on the issue by Deaf Australia and other organisations; a public protest by the community; the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's rejection of the cinemas' application for an exemption from their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act; and finally negotiations with the cinemas led by the Hon Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services and Senator the Hon. Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

"This is a fabulous outcome for us all, after a great deal of hard work by many people over many years, and we deeply appreciate the support we have received from Mr Shorten and Senator Conroy on this issue," said Deaf Australia President Kyle Miers.

"Finally Deaf and hard of hearing people will be able to watch captioned films at their local "big 4" cinema at any session they choose.

"The cinemas have clearly realised there is a benefit to them in making their cinemas accessible for everyone including Deaf and hard of hearing people and blind and vision impaired people and we congratulate them on the accessibility roll out plan they have committed to," Mr Miers said

The goals of the plan are:

1. By the end of 2014 captions and audio description will be available in at least one screen in every one of the 132 cinema complex run by Hoyts, Village Cinemas, Event Cinemas, and Reading International.

2. In addition captions and audio description will be available in:
 - one screen for every complex with 6 or less screens
 - two screens for every complex with 7 to 12 screens
 - three screens for every complex with 13 or more screens

This will equate to captions and audio description being provided at 242 screens in 132 complexes compared to the current situation where only 12 screens in 12 complexes provide captioning.

3. The timetable for achieving this goal is:
 - a. By the end of 2010, access will be provided in 24 screens (10% of target)
 - b. By the end of 2011, access will be provided in 73 screens (30% of target)
 - c. By the end of 2012 access, will be provided in 145 screens (60% of target)
 - d. By the end of 2013 access, will be provided in 194 screens (80% of target)
 - e. By the end of 2014 access, will be provided in 242 screens (100% of target)
4. Captions and audio description will be available at every session of a movie where the screen is caption and audio description equipped. For example, the initial rollout of 10% of screens will result in 840 shows per week of closed captioning and audio description content (ie. 24 screens at 35 sessions per week).

The plan will introduce new technology called CaptiView into the cinemas and the captions will be closed captions, viewed on a special device that plugs into the drink holder at the patron's seat. Not everyone likes the technology but the cinemas stress that it will improve over time.

The cinemas have also recognised the need to ensure deaf/hard of hearing and blind/vision impaired people are consulted, and they have proposed that an Advisory Group including community representatives be convened to provide advice and assist the cinema industry in meeting its goals. Deaf Australia will have a representative on this Advisory Group.

For further information about this plan go to www.fahcsia.gov.au

For information about the plan in Auslan go to

www.youtube.com/user/kmiers13#p/a/u/0/im5-WF4qiQQ

About Deaf Australia:

Deaf Australia is the only national peak body for deaf people managed 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.

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