



Deaf Australia Inc.

Media Release
For immediate release

18 July 2011

World Honour for Sydney Deaf Man

Deaf Sydneysider Colin Allen made history yesterday as the first Australian to be elected as President of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). The election was held at the WFD General Assembly in Durban, South Africa, on Sunday 17 July.

“My overall aspiration is to achieve equality for all deaf people around the world,” said Mr Allen on his website. “We must work together in order to achieve our vision of equal rights for Deaf people. WFD represents 70 million deaf people around the world to the United Nations (UN), its agencies under the UN, the International Disability Alliance, and other international peak bodies.”

Mr Allen, currently the Director of Services at the Deaf Society of NSW, will lead the WFD in working to achieve human rights for Deaf people in the areas of Sign Language, Education, Interpreting and Access, as well as looking at the effects of emerging technologies on Deaf people.

“This is an historic day for Australian Deaf people,” said Ann Darwin, President of Deaf Australia. “We are so proud that an Australian will now be leading the world promoting Deaf rights. We congratulate Colin and are looking forward to working closely with him in his new role.”

Deaf Australia, the national peak body for Deaf people in Australia, nominated Mr Allen for this position. As a Member of the WFD, they hosted the acclaimed 1999 WFD Congress in Brisbane with Mr Allen as deputy chair of the Congress organising committee. He was also president of Deaf Australia from 1989 – 1994 and 1997 – 2000.

Mr Allen, who is known for his work with Deaf associations in developing countries, has been a WFD Board member for the past eight years. His role as President will last until the next WFD Congress in four years time.

Established in Rome in 1951, WFD is an international, non-governmental central organisation of national associations of Deaf people, with a current membership of associations in 130 countries worldwide.

WFD supports and promotes in its work the many United Nations conventions on human rights, with a focus on Deaf people who use sign language, and their friends and family. The organisation has B-category status with the United Nations and is represented on many UN groups, including the World Health Organisation and the World Bank.

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