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## SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AT 2004 AGM AND BOARD MEETINGS 40-41 HELD 23-25 OCTOBER 2004

### BOARD MEETING 40

Possibilities regarding the use of videoconferencing or broadband Internet for Board meetings were considered. Arrangements were finalised for the 2004 Captioning Awards dinner, the AGM and half-day seminar in Echuca, and the display at the Deafness Expo in Melbourne on 30 October.

#### Hearing Awareness Week

The matter of Hearing Awareness Week (HAW) themes was discussed. Ruth Fotheringham queried how successful HAW had been in the last couple of years, and whether it was worth doing. Gary Kerridge suggested that, despite a lot of energy being put into it, not a lot came out of HAW. He suggested that the best sorts of awareness campaigns have catchy themes that are used every year. Jo Quayle suggested consideration be given to appointing some hearing awareness ambassadors. Veronica Pardo queried whether there might be a need for a branding exercise for the whole sector. She also noted the issue of sector unity and suggested Deafness Forum take a leadership role to unite the sector under a few key messages/brands. Margaret Robertson suggested attempts to coordinate a national focus for HAW have not worked and queried whether or not Deafness Forum should continue with its current HAW role. Kathy Challinor proposed identifying key people to push particular issues for Deafness Forum with the national media. She also proposed that Deafness Forum not determine HAW themes in future, but instead look at branding of the sector. The CEO suggested Deafness Forum might still do everything else it does in respect of HAW, but not set an annual theme. Instead Deafness Forum could do its own HAW thing, focussing on whatever it chose, and advising anyone else who wanted to join in that focus to do so if they wished. It was agreed that:

- Deafness Forum not choose an overall theme for HAW, but continue to support HAW and develop and distribute such material as other organisations may choose to use.
- Deafness Forum choose its own specific issues on which to focus during HAW.

Ruth Fotheringham advised the meeting that BHA's Canberra group had asked her to suggest a HAW theme at the AGM: "Hearing loss is not something to be depressed about". BHA Sydney had proposed another theme, "Let music blow your minds. Don't let it blow your ears."

#### Parents Information DVD/video

The launch and distribution of the Parents Information DVD/video was discussed. It was agreed to seek support from all State and Territory Ministers for Health and ask them to launch the DVD/video in their respective States and Territories. Veronica Pardo suggested that recent approaches from a number of individual parents seeking Deafness Forum support for their education cases had identified a challenge for the Deafness Forum. The CEO suggested the existing Policy Position in the education area is inadequate and that a good one is needed for use by individual parents. The Policy Position must be consistent with the Disability Discrimination Act and the planned DDA Standard on Access to Education. Veronica suggested that the over-riding goal of Deafness Forum should be to unify all the disparate voices in the sector. She queried how successful the Forum had been in that goal and asked whether another approach is needed to re-engage the sector with Deafness Forum to remind them of the gains to be had from sectoral unity. She advised that, in New Zealand, they have set a large reform agenda for the deaf sector, by focussing on desired outcomes rather than how to get there. Mary Lawson noted that education is a State/Territory responsibility in Australia and is not centralised as in NZ. Gail Smith suggested there is a lot of tension between what education providers want to do and what parents want.

## **2004 AGM**

All motions on the agenda paper were passed. The Chairperson noted that the Annual Report had proudly set out in some detail all the achievements of 2003/04, which had been a year of a lot of activity. The highlight for her had been the Captioning Quality campaign, plus the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Deafness Sector Summit and submissions to a number of committees and inquiries. The process of slowly achieving change is working and was demonstrated by the achievements of 2003/04. The CEO noted the important contributions made by the Board and other volunteers who represent the Forum in various ways, enabling much to be done despite the very limited staff and other resources. The CEO also noted that the financial situation was satisfactory. He said that, despite the good result in 2003/04, it would be necessary to continue working hard to identify new income sources.

### **Hearing Awareness Week**

The Chairperson advised the meeting of the decision by the Board that the Forum would no longer identify themes for Hearing Awareness Week, but leave that to the various separate organisations conducting activities in their local areas. Instead, the Forum would identify the issues that it wished to focus on during Hearing Awareness Week. If any other organisations wished to focus on those issues that would be fine. Deafness Forum will continue to support Hearing Awareness Week in all the other ways it has in the past, including the Website, posters, etc. Liz Evans asked if that meant there would be no theme for Hearing Awareness Week in 2005. The Chairperson responded that the Board would further consider the matter and advise members in due course.

### **Membership Sections**

John Byrne asked why it was necessary to divide Deafness Forum members into the five sections of membership. People like himself – he regards himself as Deaf and is also a member of the Australian Association of the Deaf – are regarded as hearing impaired by Deafness Forum and that makes him uncomfortable. John requested that the Board review the matter. The Chairperson noted that the Board has considered the issue before. The CEO supported John's comments and encouraged the Board to review the matter.

### **Board**

The CEO declared the results of the process to fill vacancies on the Board of Directors. The Chairperson introduced new Board member Mary Lawson and other continuing Board members present (Ruth Fotheringham, Jo Quayle, Bill Hick and Therese Pierce) identified themselves.

## **BOARD MEETING 41**

It was agreed that:

- Margaret Robertson and Ruth Fotheringham be appointed as Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson respectively until the first Board meeting following the 2005 AGM.
- expressions of interest in appointments to the casual vacancies on the Board be called for and posted separately, with responses required within 30 days of the date of posting.
- the CEO be requested to prepare a discussion paper in relation to possible changes for incorporation into the Constitution as a result of the AGM request by John Byrne.
- the previously chosen theme be the issue on which Deafness Forum focuses during HAW 2005 rather than a specific theme and, therefore, it not be put on the 2005 HAW poster.

### **Dr Sharman Stone, MP**

Margaret Robertson advised that Dr Sharman Stone, MP had displayed a considerable interest in deafness issues at the Captioning Awards dinner, particularly in the issue of affordable access for low-income people. Dr Stone had expressed a view that the hearing services delivery program needed to be targeted or redirected and Margaret had undertaken to send her copies of the relevant Policy Positions. Dr Stone had also spoken about the issue of occupational deafness within the Defence Forces, and the need for prevention of deafness within the Army. They also had discussed captioning and communication access. Dr Stone had offered to bring together interested politicians for a meeting with Deafness Forum, and noted that the Prime Minister could be a role model. It was agreed that the CEO would put relevant material together and send it to Jo Quayle for personal delivery to Dr Stone.

## Libby Harricks Memorial Orations

Therese Pierce raised the desirability of having Deaf issues as subjects for Orations. It was noted that that issue had arisen at the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Deafness Sector Summit. Therese suggested that consideration be given to building on the Deaflympics to demonstrate a partnership between hearing impaired and Deaf groups. Ruth noted that it was probably too late to change arrangements for the 2005 Oration now. She also noted that it was proposed for the 2006 Oration to be part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit in Perth. Therese stated that she would just like to see some Deaf Orators in future. She suggested that it is necessary to keep the aims clear and show respect for all parts of the deafness sector with a view to breaking down barriers. It was agreed that Marshall Smither and Ruth Fotheringham be reappointed to the LHMO Organising Committee for two-year terms ending at the 2006 AGM.

## Deafness Forum Representatives and Advisory Panels

It was agreed that:

- Margaret Robertson be appointed to the Telstra Disability Forum for a two-year term ending at the 2006 AGM.
- the NRSCC and Telecommunications Issues Advisory Panels be merged.
- Ruth Fotheringham be reappointed to the Board of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations for a term to end at the 2006 AGM.
- John Byrne be reappointed to the HREOC Captioned Movies Forum for a term to end at the 2006 AGM.
- Maureen McGrotty and Jill Marinko be reappointed to the Hearing Augmentation Issues Advisory panel for two-year terms ending at the 2006 AGM.
- Brian Rope and Andrew Stewart be reappointed to the Standards Australia ME/64 committee for two-year terms ending at the 2006 AGM.

Members of the 2005 Educational Scholarships Selection Panel were also determined.

## Policy Positions

It was agreed that:

- a Committee chaired by Therese Pierce and comprising interested members be established to take responsibility for seeking implementation of the Policy Position "Access to Interpreters for Medical appointments", with Terms of Reference to be prepared by the CEO to include monitoring of the soon to be established national Auslan booking and interpreter service.
- appropriate organisations in each State and Territory be invited to form a committee to take responsibility for seeking implementation of the Policy Position "Access to Justice".
- a committee chaired by Margaret Robertson and comprising interested members be established to take responsibility for seeking implementation of the Policy Position "Affordable Access to Hearing Health Services for Low Income People".
- in view of government funding for the next four years, there was no need to take any action regarding the Policy Position "Cost of Upgrading Cochlear Implant Speech Processors" at this time.
- the need for any action in respect of the Policy Position "Educational Issues arising from the DDA Standard on Access to Education" should be monitored.

Margaret Robertson noted that health insurance companies could do what they like regarding benefits for audiology services. She proposed that Deafness Forum continue to co-operate with the Audiological Society of Australia in respect of this matter, but not give a high priority to the Policy Position "Health insurance – Audiology services".

It was agreed that Margaret Robertson, Ruth Fotheringham and the CEO be appointed to a Committee answerable to the Board to manage the campaign designed to have policy Position "Hearing Access in Hotels, Motels and Other Similar Accommodation" implemented, and that some others be invited to join the Committee.

Jo Quayle advised that the most recent National Newborn Hearing Screening Committee teleconference had asked if Deafness Forum could advertise all that is happening in respect of identification of neonatal deafness State by State, including on its Website. She also noted that the identification of school age deafness is a minefield. It was agreed that the CEO ask Lee-Anne Sargeant to advise the Board regarding identification of perinatal and school age deafness.

It was agreed that:

- a campaign committee answerable to the Board be appointed, to seek implementation of the yet to be written Policy Position "Hearing Health as a National Health Priority".
- Deafness Forum continue to lobby for the payment of Medicare benefits for all hearing health consultations whenever the opportunity arises.
- some amendments be made to the Policy Position "Parents Access to Information" and that a group of interested members be identified to form a campaign committee (answerable to the Board) to seek implementation of that Policy Position.
- the Telecommunications Issues Advisory Panel be charged with responsibility for the campaign to seek implementation of the Policy Position "Payphones Access".

Bill Hick proposed that the CEO circulate a revised version of Policy Discussion Paper "Noise-induced (or noise injury) hearing impairment and hearing disorders: prevention through education". Margaret Robertson again noted that Dr Sharman Stone had urged that Deafness Forum investigate the Army's exposure to hearing damage. She suggested that if the Forum followed that up, Dr Stone could be invited to make an input. The CEO suggested the advocacy campaign strategy in respect of this Policy Position (when finalised) might include identification of key target groups, such as the defence Force, farmers, etc. Mary Lawson suggested it would be a good issue for attracting media publicity; e.g. damage to the hearing of Army personnel.

#### Image and Performance

Following a lengthy discussion regarding perceptions of the Deafness Forum's image and performance it was agreed that:

- an annual questionnaire be sent to members to assist evaluate the Deafness Forum's performance.
- the CEO approach some organisations to ascertain the costs of engaging an expert in respect of image and perception issues.
- a questionnaire about the Newsletter be sent out with the November 2004 issue if possible.

#### Purchasing a Hearing Aid

Margaret Robertson noted that the "Purchasing a Hearing Aid" project had been an action item for some time, and that there is a need to attempt to empower consumers. The CEO suggested the drafting of a brochure, with the finished brochure being made available in response to enquiries and being put on the Website. Bill Hick noted that people buy hearing aids without T-switches because they are not informed. CEO suggested that was the sort of issue that needed to be addressed in the brochure, and that the brochure should provide non-biased information and options. Jo Quayle commented that the target group for the brochure is vulnerable and needs good advice. It was agreed that a start be made on developing the material, OHS be asked whether it would distribute the finished brochure to voucher clients, existing OHS material be examined, and the brochure refer readers to BHA's material about T-switches.

#### Meeting with Australian Association of the Deaf

It was agreed that:

- the Deafness Forum delegation to a planned meeting with the Australian Association of the Deaf should be the Chairperson, the CEO and Therese Pierce.
- the CEO advise AAD of Deafness Forum's willingness to meet with it during November 2004 if it suits them or leave it until after the Deaflympics.

#### Costs of Deafness

The meeting discussed the increased costs that arise for people who are deaf. Jo Quayle noted that deaf people living in regional areas also incur additional costs because of the need to travel to distant centres for the services they need. It was agreed that the CEO prepare a costs of deafness document, with all Board members contributing.

#### Certificates of Achievement

Ruth Fotheringham suggested the idea of a Certificate of Achievement was valuable and could be used to promote Deafness Forum's name as well as to recognise support. Therese Pierce agreed that it would be a good way to recognise other organisations and suggested establishing criteria. It

was agreed that Mary Lawson and Jo Quayle prepare a first draft of the criteria that would determine when a Deafness Forum Certificate of Achievement might be awarded.

### Website

The meeting debated issues regarding links to commercial companies on the Website. The CEO raised the possibility of having a Members' links page on the main Website. Margaret Robertson raised the possibility of having an educational resources page on the main Website. That was agreed.

### Hearing Augmentation Systems

Bill Hick suggested there was a need to work on Local Government Authorities regarding enforcement of the existing rules in respect of hearing augmentation systems. The CEO suggested there also is a need for regular checks of installations, and undertook to try and set up a meeting for Bill and himself with LGAs.

### 2005 Meetings

Following discussion, 30 April - 1 May 2005 was identified as the first preference for the next face-to-face Board meeting, with 14 - 15 May being the second choice. It was agreed that the meeting be held in the Blue Mountains. Possible dates, venues and the format for the 2005 AGM and associated events were also discussed. It was agreed that the AGM and associated events be held in Sydney. Dates were chosen, but subsequently changed to 11-13 November 2005.

### Deaf persons and the corrective services system

The meeting discussed the issue of deaf persons and the corrective services system. Bill Hick advised that he was prepared to follow it up. Therese Pierce advised that she had met an Aboriginal man who had been wrongly imprisoned because he had no interpreter. Bill Hick stated that he would approach the Prisoner Support Group. Mary Lawson suggested investigating the Aboriginal Youth Welfare Service. The CEO undertook to obtain prison chaplain contacts for Bill and suggested putting questions to chaplains and to support groups.

### Qantas and Captioning

Ruth Fotheringham advised that a member of BHA Sydney had requested that Deafness Forum ask Qantas to caption in-flight movies and announcements by flight staff. Therese Pierce noted that Qantas international flights offer three language options and wondered why captioning could not be offered as a fourth option, especially if movies were on DVD. She also noted that it is possible for air travellers to plug their own loop system equipment into the PA sockets on planes. Jo Quayle expressed disappointment that during Hearing Awareness Week only one in-flight program on Qantas had been shown with captions, rather than all programs as promised. Margaret Robertson advised that Virgin Atlantic provides hearing loops on its flights and, so, all airlines should be able to do so. She suggested that also be raised with Qantas. The CEO undertook to follow these things up with Qantas.

### Use of a Significant Donation

The CEO raised the possibility of establishing an Educational Scholarship for secondary students, initially using a significant amount of money donated in memory a Deafness Forum member and naming it after that member. Jo Quayle suggested, as an alternative, establishing a prize for outstanding achievement by a secondary school student. Mary Lawson queried how outstanding achievement might be measured, asking whether it might recognise strugglers who get through a whole year. It was agreed that Board members give further consideration to options, rather than make any hasty decision, and the CEO consult the donor regarding the idea of naming any scholarship or award and pass on sincere thanks for the generous gift.