

About the Deafness Forum of Australia

Deafness Forum of Australia is acknowledged as the peak body in the sector providing a strong voice for the interests of its underlying constituency, namely those who are deaf, hearing impaired or have a chronic disorder of the ear.

Deafness is a serious health issue. Perhaps because it is not perceived as a life-threatening condition the sector is more marginalised than most. The sector as a whole has historically derived much of its identity from the undisputed need of the underlying constituency. This evolution has brought with it a long legacy and tradition especially in the deafness arena in areas such as education and communication.

Deafness has traditionally experienced difficulty establishing a position on the national health awareness agenda dominated by issues such as anti-smoking, obesity, mental health and physical activity. Access, noise prevention and the importance of aural communication struggle to compete with most other health-related issues. Deafness Forum aims to exercise leadership in influencing these issues.

Deafness Forum has the opportunity to make a contribution of national importance given the deafness related sector in Australia is fragmented and is not structured around a centralised authority, government derived or otherwise. Service providers in the sector are mainly confined to operating within one state and being heavily involved in their individual mission, are often not well placed to take on the roles better served by a peak body. These roles include government lobbying; systemic advocacy; generating community awareness and supporting at a more macro level, the interests of the underlying constituency.

About the deafness sector

Deafness Forum has a very broad constituency: primarily it comprises those who are deaf, hearing impaired or have a chronic disorder of the ear, as well as parents of these people. Other Deafness Forum members include a wide range of service providers such as audiologists, teachers, interpreters, researchers and self-help organisations.

How we developed our strategic plan

Our strategic planning process involved self-assessment, applying goal-setting and decision-making to map a path between the present and the future. We made a realistic assessment of the organisation's resources and the results anticipated. It is put forward not as a wish list but as a structured and measured plan to ensure our capabilities and resources can make a difference. We have considered:

- Where we want to go
- Why the destination is worth the journey
- How to get there
- What investment and sacrifice is required.

Our Vision – what we want

We have a vision of equal **access**, innovative and practical **solutions**, and welcoming community **attitudes** for people who are Deaf, have a hearing impairment or have a chronic disorder of the ear.

Access is that part of the law requiring property owners, service providers and others to make physical provision so that people with disability may enter and participate, and not face discrimination.

Our Mission – what we do

We are a leading peak agency providing a strong voice to ensure access and support the welfare of our constituents. We exercise leadership in making representations to government regarding policy and legislation; promote public awareness and encourage understanding of, and cooperation between, all areas of deafness.

For Deafness Forum of Australia our internal vision is of a well resourced peak body, playing a prominent **leadership role** in matters relating to systemic advocacy; informed position statements and collaboration in all matters relating to the sector.

Our strategic direction

Deafness Forum of Australia's **Strategic Directions (2007 – 2010)** identified four critical priorities that will be the focus over the next three years and which we believe are both consistent and integral to the underlying mission. These issues are built around what are perceived to be the intrinsic qualities that make Deafness Forum what it is and have been carefully selected to offer the prospect of robust outcomes. Our confidence in this expectation is centred on:

- Our capacity as a capable peak-body agency, able to advance particular causes rather than replicate the work of other organisations
- The priorities have been selected with careful consideration to their being both realistic and achievable in terms of Deafness Forum's resources
- The initiatives are timely and do not invite delay beyond the three year target assigned to them.

Key Result Areas

Key Priority 1 – Leadership

Deafness Forum of Australia is a powerful agent, well placed to exercise leadership across the sector.

Leadership Outcome Direction:

- Leadership involves asking what needs to be done and being sensitive to emerging issues.
- We set a direction and focus on opportunities.
- We use our access to government and central position as the peak body to press for change.
- With leadership comes the opportunity for leverage, working in collaboration with other constituents capable of making a difference within the deafness sector.

Implementation:

Deafness Forum will engage with government and within the sector to strengthen our combined capabilities and influence, particularly in the areas of hearing health including policy-making, expressed as position statements; and flowing through into community awareness and attitudes.

Key Result Areas

Key Priority 2 – Systemic Advocacy

Deafness Forum of Australia will sustain a strong presence in systemic advocacy which is defined as action to encourage broad awareness and responses in the community aimed at enhancing the rights and welfare of our constituents. There is a need for enhanced community understanding of hearing impairment as a valid and critical health concern which involves issues of prevention, awareness and societal response. We will build on our proud record in advocacy matters which have included captioning, access and related codes of practice.

Systemic Advocacy Outcome Direction:

- Systemic advocacy is a role uniquely suited to Deafness Forum's position and authority.
- Advocacy has its foundation in expertise and insight into the issues and needs of the sector and Deafness Forum will focus on reinforcing these strengths.
- Advocacy works in partnership with the rest of the sector and presumes effective communication of Deafness Forum's advocacy initiatives.

Implementation:

Deafness Forum will take the lead on advocacy that goes beyond individual advocacy and advocacy that crosses into other disability sectors.

Key Result Areas

Key Priority 3 – Stating our views with Position Statements

Policy making is to be conveyed through the release of Position Statements that endorse Deafness Forum's impartiality, authority and knowledge of the sector.

Position Statement Outcome Direction:

Position statements can influence government and public attitudes and responses. They are also available as models and informational resources within the sector

Implementation:

Position statements express Deafness Forum's recommended and preferred course of action. Position statements can inform and influence public policy-making at all levels.

Key Result Areas

Key Priority 4 – Partnering and Collaboration

Deafness Forum will strengthen its alliance with other agencies within the sector to reinforce opportunities for strategic partnering and collaboration. Deafness Forum has a good national presence and carries the prestige and lobbying power due to its role as the peak body. However it currently has limited resources. Other organisations in the sector typically have a localised presence and pressing service delivery demands that impede their capacity to replicate the Deafness Forum agenda. By combining forces, partnership will produce more effective outcomes. This can include the development of research and informational resources.

Partnering and Collaboration Outcome Direction:

Longer term Deafness Forum may give consideration to strategic partnering opportunities with others in this a fragmented sector, especially those that have a strong volunteer base; have good connections with grassroots constituents and expand Deafness Forum's presence within individual states.

Implementation:

Collaborate and network with other non profit and deafness sector organisations so that limited resources can be used more efficiently. Partnering also includes opportunities for connecting with family organisations; consumer groups and teacher organisations as well as collaboration with entities not strictly within the deafness sector.

Key Result Areas

Other Strategic Directions

Whilst we focus on these four critical strategic directions, the following remain a continuing part of the Deafness Forum agenda:

Membership

We will develop the scale and breadth of our membership, ensuring it covers more of the sector. This may include differentiating membership, for instance by introducing new categories. We will continue to explore ways to add value for members.

Disseminating Information & Research / Building Education Resources

Reinforce internal informational resources to strengthen our internal knowledge base and for external media use. Our website will continue to be developed as a capability to increase awareness and understanding of deafness and hearing.

Communication through established forums

The established forums will be nurtured including Summits; Hearing Awareness Week and possibly community events. Communication also includes reaching out to the medical community including the general practitioner population.

Prevention

Acquired deafness is an increasing concern in modern Australia. We support noise prevention awareness and will seek opportunities to partner with others in this key initiative.

Continuing representation on key national committees

Providing representatives on key committees to enable Deafness Forum's presence to expand within its sphere of influence.

Consumer protection

This is a relatively open-ended direction and will be constrained by Deafness Forum's limited resources.

Implementation and Plan of Action

It is critical to the effectiveness of this strategic plan that it be translated into a detailed first year operating plan. This includes a process for assessing the quality of outcomes and measuring performance. This is structured by specific actions and projects and answering “who ... will do what ... by when”.

Deafness Forum of Australia

218 Northbourne Avenue

Braddon ACT 2612

Tel 02 6262 7808

TTY 02 6262 7809

Fax 02 6262 7810

Email info@deafnessforum.org.au

Web site www.deafnessforum.org.au