

# Access News

## AAA



Access Audits Australia

disability access  advice  training

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## Living A Life..... *Deaflympics*

While there is 20 percent of the Australian population with a permanent disability and approximately an additional 15 percent with a temporary disability, about 88 percent of these disabilities are not visible.

One disability that is often not obvious is hearing impairment, which affects the lives of over four million people in Australia. The ability to hear often controls our day, from the bedside clock radio waking us up in the morning to the front door bell or phone ringing, and of course the conversations we have with family, friends or as part of doing business.

People who are Deaf, or experience hearing impairment need to be able to communicate, but often have to deal with the frustration that occurs when they cannot hear properly.

The Deaflympics recently held over 12 days in Melbourne and Ballarat, was an international sporting event attended by 3,500 athletes from 94 countries and 1,700 volunteers, in a celebration of sport, friendship, endeavour, new world records and participation by many people with hearing impairment or who are Deaf.

These Games were an outstanding success with over one million people visiting the Games official web site during the event. The Deaflympics is the worlds second oldest multi-sport event and one of two events under patronage of the International Olympic Committee.

Many found this an opportunity to compete and socialise with people from around the world who share similar life experiences.

You can never really know what is like to have a disability unless you experience it yourself. If those of us who can hear are aware of some of the needs of those who cannot, we can reduce the amount of frustration experienced by people with hearing impairment as they go about.....*Living a Life.*



### Access Audits Australia

provides the following range of services to support improved access to the built environment and to the provision of goods and services:

- ◆ Disability access training
- ◆ Community consultation
- ◆ Access presentations, publications and inspirations
- ◆ Development and Review of Disability Action Plans, Development Access Plans, policies and procedures
- ◆ Access Audits, Evaluations and Design Advice

Access Audits Australia is pleased to advise or assist you with any access issue.

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## Deaflympics

The Deaflympics began in 1924 as the World Games for the Deaf. In 2001, the name was changed to Deaflympics to more closely align with the Olympics.



Australia first participated in the games in 1965 in Washington DC, winning one gold and one silver medal. Prior to this many people who were Deaf or experienced hearing impairment in Australia participated in interstate competitions including cricket, tennis, table tennis, chess and draughts. The qualification standards for participation in the Deaflympics are flexible and an athlete only needs a hearing loss of at least 55 decibels in the “better ear” to be eligible to compete.

During January 2005, the Deaflympics were held in Melbourne, Australia for the first time. Approximately 3,500 athletes from about 94 countries competed in 15 competition sports including track and field, swimming and team sports. It is estimated that there was an influx of approximately 30,000 people into Melbourne during the 15 day event.

Competitors were supported by more than 1,700 volunteers, 800 international officials and a variety of sign language interpreters from around the world. Visual cues such as lights and flags were used instead of starting guns and whistles to assist Deaf or hard of hearing athletes compete at this world class level.

## Hearing Dogs

Hearing Dogs support people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment by alerting them to a variety of sounds. For example a doorbell, smoke alarm, alarm clock, crying baby, kettle boiling as well as someone calling their name.

They do this by making physical contact with their handler. The Hearing Dog can also lead their handler to the source of a sound. When the Hearing Dog is placed in the handler’s home, further training occurs to “customise” the dog to assist in the particular environment.

Hearing dogs are also trained in basic obedience skills and must be focused and non-aggressive.

Hearing Dogs can be almost any breed and often wear an orange leash and collar.

Further information can be obtained from Lions Hearing Dogs. Telephone: 08 8388 7836 TTY: 08 8388 1297

## SMS and Email



Two of the most significant communication enhancements of the twentieth century for people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment are SMS and email. They have revolutionised communications world wide for many millions of people who are Deaf.

In addition, the use of SMS and email has also been embraced by other people who have difficulty communicating by voice over the telephone. This is particularly the case in rural or remote areas, where other alternatives such as Telephone Typewriters cannot currently be supported by technology such as digital wireless technology.

Access by SMS and email are an option for most businesses and provide a quick, relatively inexpensive alternative to other forms of communication. They allow direct, personal communication between parties who previously may have had to use an alternative service requiring a third party for communication or rely on family or friends for assistance.

Both SMS and email provide confidence and independence for people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment.

## One Person's View



In 1847 in Edinburgh, Scotland he was born into a family with a passion for communication. His grandfather had a reputation as an impressive actor with a commanding speaking voice and a noticeable presence.

His grandfather had two sons, David and Melville, who shared a similar interest in the mechanics and methods of vocal communication. Melville's keen interest in speech was said to have increased when he fell in love with a woman who was Deaf, Eliza Grace Symonds, who he would eventually marry.

Even though Eliza was Deaf she developed into a talented pianist whose tenacity and determination to "hear" would especially interest the second of her three sons, Alexander Graham Bell, who took to reading and writing at a young age.

As he grew older, he developed an expressive, flexible, and resonant speaking voice, which he used to communicate with his mother, by speaking in low tones very close to her forehead.

His early insight that his mother would be able to "hear" him through the vibrations his voice would make would prove significant as he went on to develop more elaborate theories regarding the uses and types of sound waves. It would also assist in supporting his views as to how people who were Deaf could be connected into a world of sound.

After moving to Ontario, Bell went to the United States, where he decided to live in Boston and pursue a career as an inventor.

Throughout his life, he had been interested in the education of Deaf people. This interest led him to invent the microphone

and in 1876, his "electrical speech machine", which we now call a telephone.

Bell taught students at schools for the Deaf and also opened a school for Deaf and hearing students. Like his father he married a woman who was Deaf, Mabel Hubbard, who was a former speech pupil.

Bell imagined great uses for his telephone, but he could never have imagined that telephone lines would be used to transmit pictures and video images. His "electrical speech machine" paved the way for access to the Internet.

When Bell died, on August 2, 1922, telephones throughout the United States of America were silent for a minute in tribute to the man whose yearning to communicate made them possible.

## Sign Language



Sign language has existed for many thousands of years and is referred to in Greek history. It is seen as the main distinguishing feature that defines a Deaf Community. Auslan (Australian Sign Language) is the primary language of many people who are Deaf or have Deaf parents and of many hearing children of Deaf parents. Some research suggests that there are almost 16,000 users of Auslan in Australia as well as users of sign language from other countries.

The Australian Government has recognised the Deaf Community as a language group and it has become recognised that signing Deaf people constitute a group like any other non-English speaking language group in Australia. In order for people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment to participate equitably in a range of social situations, meetings, business and sports, organisations have an obligation to provide sign language interpreters when they are holding events. Sign language interpreters can be hired from Deaf associations within Australia for an hourly fee. They travel around the country to provide their services, however there is often a shortage in rural areas. For further information contact Australian Association of the Deaf [www.aad.org.au](http://www.aad.org.au)

## Did you know ?

- That since 1982 the Lions Clubs of Australia have trained and placed more than 330 hearing dogs around Australia.
- That there are over 3.3 million people in Australia over 60 years of age and over half of this number have a disability.
- That approximately \$40 m was spent on hotel accommodation alone during the Deaflympics in Melbourne, with over 22,000 hotel rooms booked for visiting athletes, officials and supporters.
- That hearing impairment and Deafness is the most common disability in Australia affecting some 4 million people.
- That about 30% of Dalmatians are Deaf so they cannot be used as hearing dogs (just great pets).
- That toy manufacturers in Japan are making dolls for older people who are lonely. These companion dolls can talk, offer caring words and act as substitutes for children or grandchildren in a country where the birthrate is at an all time low.
- That over 40,000 pictures were taken by the Deaflympic Games official photographers.
- That an old Quack's cure for hearing loss was to fry peach kernels in hog lard and put drops in the ear until the deafness is gone.

## Mornington Peninsula Shire

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council has recently commenced development of a Commercial Activities on Footpath Project with the release of a Draft Policy document for public comment.

Council wishes to achieve a practical balance with footpath uses between the competing needs and interests of pedestrians and businesses, while providing access for all, consistent with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

AAA is assisting Council with policy development, consultation and implementation phases, as well as staff training in access awareness.

## Improvements for people who are Deaf

The following supports can improve access for customers and clients who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment:

- Telephone Typewriter
- Fax
- Email
- SMS
- Captions on videos and TV screens
- Flashing light or vibration systems that alert people when they are being called e.g. when their order is ready, when the doctor is ready to see them etc.
- Volume control on telephones
- Written information regarding your services
- Written information regarding directions around facilities
- AAA customer service counter card
- Information on your web site regarding your services
- Well lit customer service areas to assist with lip reading
- Sign language interpreters
- 'Hearing Dog welcome' signs
- Hearing augmentation to assist in meetings/presentations
- Staff training in access awareness issues

### AAA Web site

Details about services provided by Access Audits Australia can be found on our web site at [www.accessauditsaustralia.com.au](http://www.accessauditsaustralia.com.au)

Our site is designed to be accessible for all users. It has AAA W3C level compliance and is AAA Bobby approved. Earlier Access News editions can be downloaded and there are also links to other relevant access related web sites.

Information contained in **Access News** is intended to highlight the importance of improving access for every person

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