

MEDIA RELEASE

Childhood hearing service coalition welcomes Federal disability commitment

Thursday 12th August 2011: *First Voice*, a national coalition of leading hearing service providers, has welcomed the commitment of the Federal Government to invest significant new resources in disability support.

First Voice Chairperson Dr Dimity Dornan said that plans announced by Prime Minister Julia Gillard on Wednesday show the Federal Government appreciates the benefits to the community that would be realised by investing additional resources in disability support and services.

“While there are clear arguments for increased disability support based on social equity and compassionate grounds, the broader benefits to the community are sometimes overlooked. Of course it depends on the level of disability in each case, but if we can help people live more productive lives then they will realise better educational outcomes, better long term employment prospects and eventually become less welfare dependent. The entire community then benefits from these developments,” said Dr Dornan.

First Voice is currently finalising a cost-benefit analysis of early intervention hearing services for deaf children in Australia, which will be launched at Parliament House in Canberra on the 22nd of August.

“There has always been a strong argument to be made in favour of investing resources in early intervention support for young children with hearing disabilities. But we have wanted to confirm these benefits with a proper study, which will soon be released. It is incumbent on those who provide disability services to try to be as clear as possible about the broader benefits of increased investment in services. That is exactly what First Voice is currently in the process of doing,” said Dr Dornan.

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** First Voice is the national voice for five leading Australian charities whose primary focus is the provision of listening and spoken language therapy services in Australia. Evolved from the Alliance of Deaf Children, First Voice represents the largest group of early intervention organisations for hearing impaired children in the region – supporting thousands of children across Australia.*