**Date:** Monday 30 May 2016

**Education centre upgrade for deaf and hard of hearing**

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing would receive a better education and get more out of their school life under a proposed redesign of the state’s Centres for Hearing Impaired (CHIs).

Under the plan, which was presented to parents and key stakeholders, primary school services would be consolidated at Klemzig and Brighton Primary Schools from 2017, making them the dedicated primary-level CHIs for the northern and southern suburbs respectively.

The proposed changes, which include an increased resource allocation of $460,000 over four years, would see students receive more access to speech pathology and psychological support from people experienced in working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Stakeholders have until 30 June to provide comment and feedback on the plan.

Additional features of the plan include:

- Students to receive a higher standard of teaching and support, be exposed to a broader curriculum, have more opportunities to socialise and access a wider range of extracurricular activities.
- Lessons delivered simultaneously in English and Auslan by two teachers (one with Teacher of the Deaf qualifications) and/or a School Support Officer.
- Deaf and hard of hearing role models engaged to act as mentors.
- Classrooms given acoustic treatment and other upgrades to adapt them to meet the learning needs of students who are hard of hearing.
- All students at the schools with centres given the opportunity to study Auslan as a second language, meaning those who are deaf or hard of hearing will be able to socialise with a larger number of children.
- School staff supported to gain Auslan qualifications.
- Introduction of Educational Interpreters in the secondary centres.

**Background**

The planned new approach has been developed as a result of a year-long review of services which has included extensive consultation with health and education experts, families, schools and the Deaf community.
There are currently 84 children enrolled across six centres (Klemzig Primary, Brighton Primary, Elizabeth Park Primary, Hillcrest Primary, Adelaide High, Windsor Gardens Secondary College).

The centres at Elizabeth Park Primary and Hillcrest Primary would close as specialist centres at the end of 2016.

There would be no reduction in the level of operational funding or staff allocated to running the Centres for Hearing Impaired and related services.

The 15 deaf and hard of hearing students who currently attend the two centres that will be consolidated would be offered the following options:

- Moving to the nearest specialist centre at Klemzig or Brighton with transport assistance to the nearest centre provided by the department subject to eligibility criteria.
- Staying on in mainstream classes at their current schools with support.
- Moving to another local school with support.

Principals and the department would work with affected parents and students to support them through the transition.

Adelaide High School and Windsor Gardens Secondary College would remain the secondary school CHIs, with an enhanced program and additional supports as described above.

Details of the proposal are available from the DECD website.

Quotes attributable to Ann-Marie Hayes, Executive Director Statewide Services & Child Development:

We think the proposal would make South Australia a leader in educating children who are deaf or hard of hearing and enable the students to achieve highly.

The plans we are putting forward for feedback would help us give students more access to speech pathology and other support services.

It would also offer students greater opportunities to take part in school life and form lasting friendships with their hearing peers.
We also plan to invest in training so that staff can communicate more effectively with students and reengineer the buildings to make learning easier for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The year-long review has allowed us to consult widely in formulating the plans and principals have opened up a good discussion with affected families.

The motivation is to improve services for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, which is why we plan to increase overall spending on the centres and related programs.

Consolidating primary school services is a big step which is why we want to work with parents to get the best outcome for their children.

We look forward to hearing feedback on the proposal.

-ENDS-