

MEDIA RELEASE



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Deaf community sends loud message

The plight of the Darling Downs deaf community has been heard loud and clear and their efforts have secured a major grant.

They will receive \$95,000 through the National Disability Insurance Scheme's Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Grant program. It is the first grant of its type and size for the Toowoomba deaf community.

The grant will be used to formalise the Darling Downs Deaf Hub, improve community and employer opportunities and provide skills for deaf people.

Toowoomba not-for-profit organisation, YellowBridge QLD, assisted with the grant application and will provide support to help the deaf community establish the Darling Downs Deaf Hub and implement their plans over the next 12 months.

YellowBridge CEO Penny Hamilton said her own experience with deaf grandparents was part of the reason why they wanted to help the deaf community apply for the grant.

"Our deaf community is facing significant challenges and this is leading to many of them experiencing isolation and exclusion," Ms Hamilton said.

"A lack of meaningful employment and adequate support services means they are often financially and socially vulnerable," she said.

"Part of our role as a leading disability support organisation is to advocate on behalf of people with a disability and open doors to more opportunities."

There are approximately 100 deaf people who live on the Darling Downs and it is estimated that 50 percent of them have minimal social connections.

Megan Telford, a spokesperson for the deaf community, will be part of establishing the Hub to reduce social isolation and increase community participation.

"This grant is a major achievement for our deaf community and will enable us to provide the services and support they need," Ms Telford said.

"We help with document translation, connecting to support services, housing assistance, interpreting, developing life skills, access to employment and wider community connections. Our support is critical to our community," she said.

"Many deaf people have the skills and ability to be contributing members of our society, they just lack the opportunities to do so."

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