



MEDIA RELEASE

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Senses to share research findings at international conference

Vital research into the prevalence of deafblindness in Western Australia – and its implications for the developed world - will be a key topic of discussion at Deafblind International's (DBI) 7th European Conference in Italy in September this year.

The paper accepted for presentation by Senses Foundation's Chief Executive Officer Debbie Karasinski will outline the findings of the ground-breaking *Unseen and Unheard* report.

Commissioned in 2007 by Senses Foundation, this report revealed that the impact of deafblindness in developed countries could be significantly underestimated.

"Current estimates indicate that deafblindness in developed countries like Australia affects 20 people in every 100,000," explains Ms Karasinski.

"If this estimation is correct, in WA you could expect to find only 386 people with deafblindness. However, the study revealed that an incredible 8,800 people were living with the dual sensory disability of deafblindness.

"Given the projected increase in the number of older Australians in coming years, and the increased incidence and prevalence of a range of conditions contributing to deafblindness, these numbers can only be expected to increase in the future."

Ms Karasinski says her presentation will look at the methodology of the study, the findings and the implications for service delivery.

It will also consider the causes of deafblindness in Western Australia – in particular the higher rates of deafblindness among the indigenous population - and the implications for service providers in other developed countries.

The theme of DBI's 7th international conference is "Tides Waves and Currents in Research and Action".

Senses Foundation was formed when the Royal WA Institute for the Blind - one of WA's oldest charities - amalgamated with the WA Deafblind Association. It is now WA's primary advocate and service provider for people who are deafblind or blind with additional disabilities, providing highly specialised programs and services to

improve communication, socialisation, mobility and quality of life for both adults and children.

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