



MEDIA RELEASE

14 April 2010

Senses Foundation staff head east for conference

Western Australia's Senses Foundation will have a significant presence at the 8th Australian Deafblind Conference in Melbourne later this month.

Seventeen staff members will be travelling to the conference and eight will be presenting papers highlighting Senses' leadership in the provision of services for people with disabilities.

The presentation topics include:

- Assistive technology for children who are deafblind;
- Senses Foundation's pilot project using Communication Guides;
- Supporting the siblings of young clients;
- Senses' booklet "You and Me – Keeping in Touch" – for people with age related deafblindness; and
- Person-centred approaches to providing disability services.

Senses' Chief Executive Officer Debbie Karasinski says the three-day conference titled "*Deafblindness in Australia: new ideas, directions and solutions*" aims to explore new ideas, directions and solutions on how to support people with deafblindness, and their families, and influence the development of policies that support and strengthen their roles in the community.

It will give Senses Foundation the opportunity to showcase its services and up-skill its staff significantly to meet the needs of people who were deafblind in WA, including people with age related deafblindness.

"As the primary provider of disability services for people who are deafblind in WA, Senses Foundation is always looking for opportunities to train its staff," says Ms Karasinski.

"Most of the relevant conferences are in the United States or Europe, so when this opportunity presented itself we pulled out all stops to have as many staff attend as possible."

Ms Karasinski says deafblindness is a unique disability which, until 2007, was almost unrecognised and certainly under serviced in WA.

However, a study commissioned in 2007 by Senses Foundation identified almost 9000 people who are deafblind across the state.

“Since then Senses Foundation has dramatically increased its specialist services for these people,” she says.

The National conference runs from 28 to 30 April. Partial funding for Senses staff to make the trip has been provided by Lotterywest.

More information: Leanne Pitcher, Media Liaison Officer, 0408 923 249.