



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Helping Older Australians Enjoy the Movies: Accessible Cinema

The Federal Government today announced a plan to improve smaller independent cinemas for some of the four million people with vision and hearing impairment with special audio description (AD) equipment and captioning.

Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot, announced the Australian Government would commit \$350,000 in a one-off project – to ***Helping Older Australians Enjoy the Movies: Accessible Cinema***.

The Independent Cinemas Association of Australia, Media Access Australia and the Department of Health and Ageing will work together to select **12 cinema locations** nationally for the plan in rural, regional and suburban areas.

It will bring the number of Australian accessible cinemas to 22.

Helping Older Australians Enjoy the Movies: Accessible Cinema is part of the Federal Government's commitment to a greater focus on positive and active ageing – as part of its agenda to promote social inclusion and participation, as well as reducing social isolation.

In 2001, the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission agreed with Hoyts, Greater Union and Village to three sessions a week of captioned or AD films in 10 locations nationally - two per cent of Australian cinemas.

They are located in eight capital cities – plus Glendale in Newcastle and Maroochydore on the Sunshine Coast.

Mrs Elliot said: "Older Australians have told me that they want to share in the pleasure of going to the movies with their grandchildren during the school holidays but cannot enjoy the films because they are unable to hear them."

"This is about people with hearing and visual impairments enjoying blockbusters like ***Get Smart*** or ***Kung Fu Panda*** with their grand children.

"I want to help throw open even more doors in Australian cinemas to people with hearing impairment – and for some, this may be the first film, they have seen in years."

Australian Hearing confirms more than half of the population aged between 60 and 70 has a hearing loss. This increases to 70 per cent for those over the age of 70.

In addition, more than half of Australia's farmers are likely to have premature hearing loss from their work.

“Helping Older Australians Enjoy the Movies: Accessible Cinema” is a first step, but there is more work to be done,” Mrs Elliot said.

The United States has more than 830 accessible cinemas, representing 15 per cent locations; the United Kingdom has more than 250 accessible cinemas; New Zealand has three.

“This seed funding provides a one-off injection, but I am hopeful that cinemas all over the country will realise the commercial gains that are possible by catering for this demographic,” Mrs Elliot said.

It is hoped ***“Helping Older Australians Enjoy the Movies: Accessible Cinema”*** will encourage the major commercial chains to further expand their AD and captioning programs.

The plan also complements a Film Finance Corporation announcement that from 1 July 2007 all Australian features funded by the FFC will be captioned. This means more people would be able to see Australian films.

Captioning and Audio Description (AD)

Captioning is the reproduction of a soundtrack in text format. Similar to subtitles (which are simply a foreign language translation of the dialogue), captions are a transcription of the entire soundtrack, including sound effects, into the same language.

Audio description (AD) is a service in which additional commentary is provided to narrate the visual elements of a movie. AD guides the listener with concise, objective descriptions of new scenes, settings, costumes, body language, and “sight gags”, all spoken between existing portions of dialogue.

Background to organisations

Independent Cinemas Association of Australia (ICAA) is the industry body that represents independent cinemas within Australia. ICAA represents 62 per cent of Australian independent screens and many of them are smaller locations are operating in rural or regional areas.

Media Access Australia (MAA) is a not-for-profit, public benevolent institution and Australia's primary media access organisation. Its role is to provide information about media access and to support the development and application of technological solutions to media access issues. This includes, but is not limited to, captioning and audio description.

ICAA has formed a partnership with Media Access Australia to extend the rollout of accessible cinema. Regional cinemas, although keen to implement accessible cinema sessions, have lower profit margins compared to metropolitan multiplexes. The cost for the purchase of accessible equipment is a financial expense that many regional cinemas will struggle to meet.

For more information, contact Mrs Elliot's office on (02) 6277 7280