



## **MEDIA RELEASE**



### USE OF VOLUNTEERS TO COMMUNICATE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COURTS

16 December 2015

Communication Rights Australia and Disability Discrimination Legal Service reject the proposal by the South Australian Department of Justice to use volunteers in the role of Communication Support Workers for people with disabilities in South Australian courts.

While welcoming South Australia's recent Disability Justice Plan, Disability Discrimination Legal Service Manager Julie Phillips stated "*The Courts have required paid and professionally qualified Auslan interpreters and Deaf/Blind Interpreters for many years now. To discriminate against people with cognitive disability and/or complex communication needs by suggesting they can use volunteers in the same situation is not acceptable.*"

Jan Ashford, CEO of Communication Rights Australia said that it was wrong for the Attorney General to compare the role of Communication Support Workers to volunteer Independent Third Persons in Victoria. "*The giving of accurate evidence to the courts as a victim of crime is paramount. People with complex communication needs have enough barriers already without having to rely on volunteers. Similar professional services, such as the UK "intermediary" system require a high level of professionalism, ethics and expertise. Australian people with disabilities deserve the same, as do the courts.*"

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