



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 1980

DEAFNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Seven out of 100 Australians suffer from serious hearing defects. This figure includes those who were born deaf and those who lost hearing through accident or illness.

Last year at this time, I was pleased to launch the first Australian Deafness Awareness Week. It has been most heartening that a recommendation from Australia was accepted by the World Federation of the Deaf - and that today commences the first International Deafness Awareness Week.

This has certainly been a positive step to encourage wider understanding of the particular problems faced by the deaf. In Australia, a considerable amount of work is now being undertaken on how to introduce what is called a "closed captioning system" on television to assist the deaf.

The Minister for Post and Telecommunications, Tony Staley, has asked a number of organisations if they will meet within a few weeks to explore the best ways of introducing such a system. These groups include the Australian Centre for Visual Television, the Broadcasting Council, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Special Broadcasting Service and the Commercial television industry.

I am very hopeful this meeting will lead, as quickly as possible, to a closed captioning system being introduced into Australia for the first time. There is no doubt that this will open up a whole new world for the deaf.

This week throughout Australia the Deafness Awareness Council has arranged a wide programme of events to make us all aware of the severe handicap of deafness.

In launching Deafness Awareness Week for 1980 I hope that all Australians go out of their way to show the deaf special care and understanding.