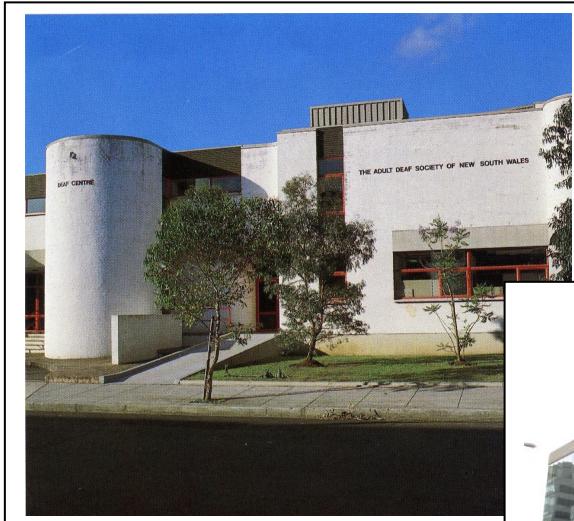


# **Stanmore to Parramatta**

## **Oral History Project**

### **Changes within the Deaf Community**

**A Deaf Society of NSW Project**



**Report prepared by Alice Ansara  
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**Supported by:  
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# Contents

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SUMMARY REPORT .....</b>	<b>4</b>
THE DEAF SOCIETY OF NSW.....	4
THE 'OLD DAYS' – BEFORE THE STANMORE DEAF CENTRE.....	4
FIRST MOVE TO STANMORE .....	5
FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF STANMORE.....	8
BIG CHANGES AHEAD .....	17
THE SALE OF STANMORE AND THE MOVE TO PARRAMATTA .....	22
TODAY'S DEAF SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS IN PARRAMATTA .....	27
<b>FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>35</b>
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	35
CHRONOLOGY.....	37
BIOGRAPHIES OF INTERVIEWEES .....	39

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# Introduction

The Deaf Society of NSW has long considered its move from the inner Sydney suburb of Stanmore to the western Sydney area of Parramatta to be a significant chapter in the NSW Deaf Community's history. It is now able to document this move through "The Stanmore to Parramatta" project with the support of the Parramatta City Council's Community Grants Program (2012 – 2013) as part of the Council's Heritage & Stories Research Funding.

This summary report and the compilation film which accompanies it aim to tell the story of the move primarily through 'oral histories'. However, in this instance when we use the term 'Oral History' we must acknowledge that for many of the key players in this story, a spoken or 'oral' language is not used. Rather, their personal accounts are told through Auslan, the native sign language of many Australian deaf people. In order to record the accounts of Auslan users, their interviews, as well as those of their hearing counterparts, have been visually recorded. These interviews, as is the aim of 'oral histories', serve to augment the history given to us through written documents and enrich the account by communicating the subjective impact of the issues as they affected these witness participants. Their opinions, observations and insights give the wider social and political forces at work a truly human dimension.

The 'Stanmore to Parramatta' Project comprises approximately 13 hours of interviews with 10 interviewees. The interviewees include hearing and deaf people and comprise those who currently work at the Deaf Society, who once worked in the organisation and those whose connection with the issues is through grass roots involvement in the Deaf Community.

The Summary Report presented here is part of a project that includes original interview files, rough logs, photographs, research material and very importantly, a 19 minute edited film version of the report. Because the Deaf Society wishes the findings of this report to be available to deaf people and for many, a written report in English would be inaccessible; the film should be made available alongside the written component as an integral part of the report.

Excerpts from the oral history interviews are included in the Summary Report. Over half of these interviews were conducted in Auslan and therefore the English renditions of the quotes are translations made by a NAATI accredited Auslan interpreter.

The quotations used in this report are annotated with the signer's/speaker's last name, or in the case of the Allen siblings by initial and last name (e.g. CAllen), followed by the file number of the digital recording for that person and then the time at which the excerpt first appears. For example, **Ferris003 15:15** tell us that the quote comes at 15 minutes, 15 seconds into file 003 recorded with John Ferris.

At the time of this report's publication, some of the interviewees are currently in managerial positions with the Deaf Society. However, the opinions expressed in the interviews and summarised in this report are those of the individuals concerned and do not necessarily represent the views of the Deaf Society of NSW.

The support of the Parramatta City Council is again acknowledged and as the writer of this report, I would also like to particularly thank James Bradley for his patient assistance with the film component, Susannah Macready for her supervision, and Nola Colefax for always being wonderful.

# **Summary Report**

## ***The Deaf Society of NSW***

The Deaf Society of NSW has now been in existence for 100 years. It has been the leading provider of specialist services for deaf and hard of hearing people and their families in NSW since 1913. Over this century the Deaf Society has gone through many challenges and changes and has emerged as a stable organisation providing services which include community development, advocacy, employment, training and education, interpreting, disability and regional support.

Services are delivered across the state of New South Wales from the Society's headquarters in Parramatta, Sydney as well as through regional offices in Newcastle, the Central Coast, Coffs Coast, Lismore and the South Coast. Additional support services are also provided in Nowra, Orange, Port Macquarie and Tweed Heads.

Of the approximately 50 permanent staff employed by the Society, around 43% are deaf staff and 57% hearing. Human rights are high on the agenda for the organisation whose vision is 'equity for deaf people' and whose mission is to work in partnership with the Deaf Community to 'enhance the quality of life of deaf people, strengthen the community and advocate for changes that will ensure fundamental rights and freedoms'.

Such an objective, however, was not always the case and this Summary Report will outline the way in which the Society's move in 1995 from Stanmore to Parramatta reflected significant and complex social changes within the organisation.

## ***The 'Old Days' – Before the Stanmore Deaf Centre***

While the Deaf Society of NSW has existed in various forms and in various locations since its establishment in 1913, an important step towards the creation of the Stanmore Centre is to be found in the purchase by the Society's Board of Management of Elizabeth House in Sydney's CBD. In 1927, Elizabeth House at 5 Elizabeth Street was established as the Society's headquarters,<sup>1</sup> and significantly, such decisions were made by a hearing Superintendent and hearing Board of Management in service of the Society's aim of providing welfare services for deaf people in NSW.

The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society of NSW as it was then known drew inspiration from the Methodist and Congregational churches with their tradition of service to the 'poor and unfortunate'.<sup>2</sup> And at this time, deaf and hearing impaired people were considered to fall well within this categorisation. An important dimension of the Society's assistance to these 'unfortunates' was provided by church services conducted by the Society's Superintendent and welfare officers, regardless of their theological training, and a strong moral emphasis was placed on abstemious conduct.

John Ferris became a trainee welfare worker with the Deaf Society in 1953 and began his involvement with the organisation in its Elizabeth House era. He recalls Elizabeth House as

... a rather Dickensian old building. ... The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society of NSW as it was called then, owned the building. ... I lived in the building for three years after I got married. ... It was rather dark. The basement held the billiard room. ... A very old and rather dingy building.

Ferris001 01:55

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<sup>1</sup> The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society, March 1944, 'A Short History of the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society of NSW', *The Silent Messenger*. p. 6

<sup>2</sup>Bennet, G. 2011, *More than Music* Australian Music Centre, Sydney p. 98

Alcohol was BANNED - in the early days if you were seen going into a pub! – at 5 Elizabeth St there was a pub next door and if you were seen going into a pub you wouldn't be allowed back. ... That was the attitude. That was the Methodist influence on the organisation.

Ferris004 06:45

Trevor Boyle, now a respected member of the Wollongong Deaf Community, recollects that when he was a young man deaf people met outside 5 Elizabeth St, gathering around a street lamppost in order to continue socialising, the light from the lamp falling on their hands as they chatted:

I'll never forget standing around chatting under the lamppost. I can't remember the exact spot, but just near 5 Elizabeth St there was a lamppost, and when we left the building we would stand there for a long time chatting in the light of the lamp while we all froze in the cold!

Boyle000 14:10



Sketch of Gordon Davis House Youth Hostel

## ***First move to Stanmore***

The Society's first foray into the inner west suburb of Stanmore occurred in 1949 with the building of a hostel to improve the provision of welfare services. The Gordon Davis House Youth Hostel was established in Cambridge Street, Stanmore to accommodate "fifty deaf and dumb men and women from country homes employed in and around Sydney, but who have not regular and satisfactory accommodation".<sup>3</sup> In a further expansion of this service, not long after Dey House was acquired. It was connected to the Hostel and catered for another 90 people.

Julia Allen, a member of an entirely deaf family, remembers the hostel:

As a little girl, when my brother was a baby, we'd go there for children's Christmas parties every year. I assume it was the Deaf

<sup>3</sup> The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society, 1949, 'Opening of Gordon Davis House', *The Silent Messenger*, March-April 1949 p. 1

Society which provided the parties. I remember a big lounge area with trestle tables... where the children – deaf and hearing children with deaf parents - would have bread with hundreds and thousands, party food, pointy hats... a huge tree; Christmas presents for all the children were also provided by the Deaf Society.

JAllen002 07:18

In the 1960s the Society was able to extend its Cambridge Street facilities, thus creating an enclave of the Deaf Community within the suburb. The Society proudly announced:

"With Gordon Davis and Dey Houses being used to full capacity, and when the new home and units for our older and dependent Deaf is built...there will be about 120 Deaf living in the area. Moreover, with the development of the sporting and recreational facilities surrounding the buildings...there will be increased activities on a larger scale."<sup>4</sup>

The development of such facilities in Stanmore was seen by the Society as "clear evidence that the present Board of Management is alive to its great responsibilities and its privileges by making such provision for the comfort and protection of our people." The paternalism implied by such a sentiment very much typifies the management approach of the Society at this time. The dominance of hearing people in the running of the organisation made it one for, rather than of, deaf people. Yet originally, the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society had been established by deaf people. When deaf people were marginalised by the Board in the 1920s, there was an eight-year political struggle which included the establishment and quashing of a break-away organization known as 'The NSW Association of Deaf and Dumb Citizens'.<sup>5</sup> Despite this challenge, the running of the Society had been vested firmly in the hands of hearing men for most of its existence. John Ferris talks about the staff composition of the Society in that era:

[...] everything was done by hearing people FOR deaf people. It was rather sad that that happened so much. In the early days, deaf people weren't allowed on staff. Even relatives of deaf people weren't allowed on staff. ... International conferences – it would be hearing staff that would go, not deaf people.

Ferris001 19:10

Mr. Bill Engel worked for the Deaf Society from 1933 – 1980 and for a large part of his employment was the Superintendent. Colin Allen, himself deaf and now Senior Community Engagement Advisor at the Deaf Society of NSW, remembers the attitude to the provision of services in his youth. Here he recounts a typical approach to domestic problem solving involving his father, Alf Allen, who was also deaf:

In my time it was Mr Engel who controlled the community. He was involved in playing golf. My father always talked about him. Often we would have some problem at home, say with the local council, and Mr Engel would tell him, at golf, what to do about the problem. That was simply what my father would do. He would only be influenced by Engel. If we disagreed, then he would ignore us.... I believe the men controlled the family, and the men received their advice from this hearing person. They thought he was clever, the right person to tell them what to do. Firstly because he was hearing, and possibly because of his religion – that might have influenced other less religious people. The history of Deaf Societies was grounded in missionary work. I believe or I can imagine that my father would have respected his advice, and felt that if his family made him disregard it, then he might be in trouble, might lose standing in Engel's eyes. I wish I could have been who I am now

<sup>4</sup> The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society of NSW, June 1961, 'Our Next Step', *The Silent Messenger*. p.1

<sup>5</sup> Carty, B. M. 2004. *Managing their own affairs: The Australian deaf community in the 1920s and 1930s*.

at that time to challenge that attitude, but I don't think we ever challenged it back then.

CAllen006 21:30

John Ferris worked closely with Mr. Engel and remembers him fondly:

Bill was the Superintendent under whom I started work. ... He dedicated his whole life to deaf people. He was the old style missioner. His wife was very much involved and his whole family used to come in to many of the functions [at the deaf society]. Some people might think his approach was old fashioned, I think compared to nowadays, approaches and attitudes now, you could say that is so. But it was the way things were done in those times and he just was dedicated to deaf people ... I admire him very much.

Ferris001 07:36

John Ferris adds that the consequence of Mr. Engel's management however:

... resulted in the deaf depending on him probably more than they should. Not quite developing independence... He was loved and hated because of this. In those days, and I guess you could apply this to myself too, I was very much aware of the fact that everything a deaf person did, I was involved in, or Bill was involved in – whether it was going to the bank, withdrawing money or having marriage problems or -- we knew everything about the deaf and I think some of the deaf people must of resented that, to be quite honest.

Ferris001 09:08



Mr and Mrs Bill Engel

Sharon Everson, current CEO of the Deaf Society of NSW, is hearing and began work with the Society as a Junior Secretary at the age of 18. Her memories of that time demonstrate the extent to which welfare workers of the Deaf Society shaped or controlled the lives of their clients:

The old welfare way where it was the 'deserving deaf', ... and you helped organise their family things, you gave them advice. ... The sign for Bill Engel was [signs] "the Big Boss", it was almost God! So if he told people something - that was the truth, ... deaf people rarely questioned him. In those days, Welfare would decide for instance if a young woman was unmarried and was pregnant, whether she should marry the man involved, whether she should have a termination or have the baby adopted out. They'd go to the welfare worker who'd tell

them ... what they should do. It was never, 'I'm in this situation, what are my options?', it was 'here's what you should do.' ... I understand people were trying to protect people. The welfare workers weren't mean or bad or evil. ... In those days they still took children from single parents, adopted them out. Aboriginal kids were still stolen from their parents. The Deaf Society wasn't atypical. That's just the way it was, it was run by the churches or kind hearted people and they thought they were doing the right thing in terms of their value judgements....

Everson001 07:30

## ***Further Development of Stanmore***

In 1969 a lawyer, Kenneth Tribe AC became the Chair of the Board of the Deaf Society. 'Ken' Tribe has been described as the man who 'struggled to bring the [Deaf Society] into the modern age'<sup>6</sup> and who believed that the Deaf Community could gain greater control of their own affairs. Tribe began to implement some major initiatives towards this goal. His ambition of constructing a purpose-built Welfare Centre in Stanmore was one of the major turning points in the history of the Deaf Society of NSW.



Ken Tribe and Dorothy 'Dot' Shaw look at plans for the Stanmore Complex

It was the dream really of Ken Tribe to present something that deaf people would be proud of and bring them into the 20th century. And indeed it did that - it was a lavish building. ... A place to be proud of - possibly a little bit over designed but it was a very modern building. ... It cost a lot of money (laughs) ... We had a very modern nursing home within the Stanmore complex, the hostel 'Gordon Davis House', the 'Alfred Lonsdale House Nursing Home' had been moved there into a very modern building. And this very modern 'Club' -- the deaf people called it "the Club" – but was the Headquarters of the organisation.

Ferris003 15:15

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<sup>6</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW, 2013 '*Stanmore to Parramatta Oral History Project*' John Ferris Interview, Ferris001 16:30

In 1970, the Society sold Elizabeth House and moved its offices to Stanmore, temporarily locating them in Dey House during the five-year planning and construction of the new complex. As a result of consultation with the Society's Building Committee, the Deaf General Committee and the Oral Deaf Committee, the new Stanmore "Deaf Centre" incorporated many features requested by the Deaf Community. In December, 1975 the Society's monthly publication, *The Silent Messenger* reported:

It is hard to believe that the dream which some of us have had for so many years has become a reality but, we rub our eyes and there it is to see – at 123 Cambridge Street, Stanmore.

The Deaf Centre is of three floors, the main entrances being on the middle floor on the Cambridge Street level. Here are situated the offices of the Adult Deaf Society with all the essentials for running a modern office.

Also on this floor is a large Board Room which can be divided into three and which provides for committee meetings as well as for a small Chapel. This contains some of the original woodwork from the Helen Keller Chapel where the deaf used to worship in the City. A large education room, children's play room, baby creche, deaf committee's office and amenities are also on this floor.

The main auditorium is on the higher level and, as well as a games or dancing area, has a carpeted section, a coffee lounge, a television room and billiards and table tennis rooms running therefrom. There is a large stage for theatre productions with dressing rooms and a well-equipped kitchen to service a variety of functions.

The lower level is intended to cater more for the sports men and women with a bowlers lounge which will service the full size 8 rink bowling green, a squash court, a crafts room, shower and locker rooms and a very large storage area as well as the air conditioning plant room.<sup>7</sup>



The exterior of the Stanmore Deaf Centre. Photo: Deaf Society 1980 Annual Report

<sup>7</sup> The Adult Deaf Society of NSW, December 1975, 'The Deaf Centre', *The Silent Messenger*. p. 1

John Ferris remarks that the new complex gave the Deaf Community

...something to be proud of, it did quite a lot for their self esteem rather than going into this awful little building in 5 Elizabeth St. ... [which was] pretty dingy and made them feel second class – Stanmore was a special building and they were proud of it.

Ferris004 16:23

The Society's new headquarters, which became referred to as simply 'Stanmore', became home to a number of important cultural activities within Sydney's Deaf Community. These included the Friday evening 'Club Nights' which were a series of social events created by the Deaf General Committee<sup>8</sup>, the establishment and housing of the New South Wales Theatre of the Deaf which later became the highly successful Australian Theatre of the Deaf, the housing of sporting clubs and many other programmes in line with the prevailing ideas regarding provision of welfare services.

Trevor Maggs was born in South Australia and moved to Sydney in 1986:

My first impression when I moved to Sydney was of Stanmore - the big white building on 123 Cambridge St. You met so many people there. It was a vibrant place. Lots of young people, very social. I remember there was a once-a-month bar service, and the other Fridays were for coffee and pool...

Maggs000 02:55

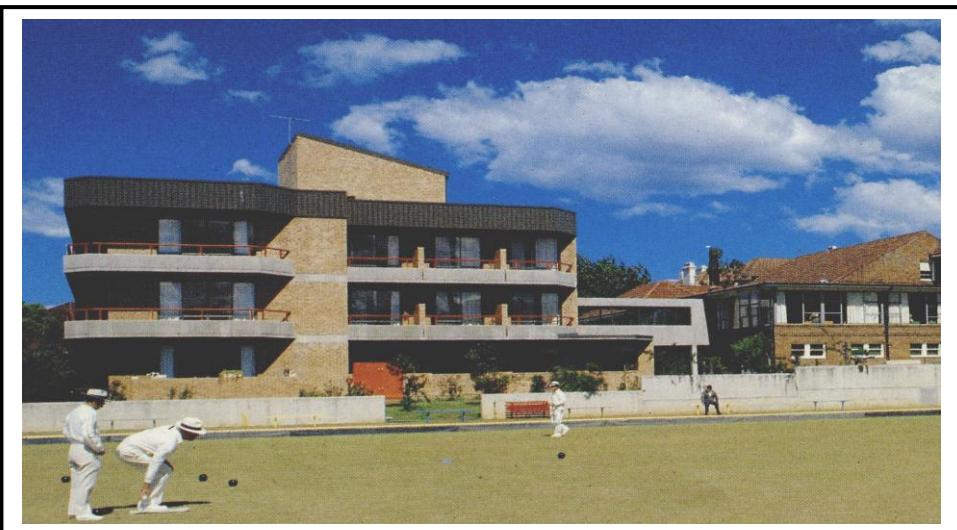
It would be hard to find a member of the NSW Deaf Community who has anything other than utterly fond memories of 'Stanmore'. Descriptions overflowing with warm memories of the Deaf Centre prevail and many members of the community describe the Centre as one might a loving family home. One such member of the Deaf Community is Tony Clews:

There was an empty space under the stair where children would hide and talk, or play hide and seek. Upstairs was a big hall with a canteen, a painting of the Queen... The canteen had everything; lollies, toasted sandwiches, tea, coffee.... Alan Fairweather used to work at the canteen, and when I went to buy something we'd get talking about his life, my life, school, lots of things, while the queue grew behind me! ... The Deaf Club had a massive hall with a stage. If something was on, someone would turn on the flashing lights to get everyone's attention.... Downstairs were Squash courts... there were competitions every Friday, and four divisions. There was a board room for meeting, the Andrew Rogers Education Room... Downstairs there was a bar, and 200-300 people would come every Friday. It was great. Outside there was a bowling green; the young people would sit on the grass and the old people would tell them to get out [laughs]. I always remember Stanmore as being this big all white building... lots of things happened over the years there. You could sign up for sports teams, camping, skiing weekends, it was our second home... many (deaf) people from hearing families who were isolated at home would be so excited to come to Stanmore on Friday nights and talk and talk, until closing time, and beyond – to 3, 4, 5 o'clock in the morning under the street lights.

Clews341 12:38

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<sup>8</sup> The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society of NSW, January 1972, 'Friday Club Nights' *The Silent Messenger*. p. 7



The Stanmore Bowling Green

The Complex was designed to provide specialised services, and although the Society was gradually moving away from paternalism, The Society's Annual Report of 1975 in answer to the question 'Why a Special Centre for Deaf People?' found that:

The Society's experience is that deaf people are not able to take advantage of social, recreational or educational facilities available to others in the community....

Drawing on overseas experience and the knowledge of similar attitudes existing in Australia, caused by the lack of a common means of communication, the Society has constructed at Stanmore, a Centre which should fulfil the needs of deaf people of NSW, the majority of whom live in metropolitan Sydney....

... the Society has planned a series of programmes which will further equip deaf people in general knowledge and provide the opportunity for them to take a more meaningful place in the community. The programmes will be both habitative and rehabilitative. The habitative course will range from vocational assistance and classes in formal education to cultural pursuits such as drama, youth leadership courses, Duke of Edinburgh Award adventure courses and community orientation courses in a wide range of subjects and topics...

The Centre will also be a headquarters for the numerous sporting clubs conducted by and for deaf people. ... Sporting recreation ... is usually on a regional or ethnic basis, therefore the Society sponsors numerous sporting clubs where deaf people compete in equal competition with hearing counterparts..<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The Adult Deaf Society of NSW, 1975 *Annual Report 1975 'The Deaf Centre'*.



Ladies of the Stanmore Deaf Women's Bowling Club

The Society's provision of such specialist services, along with the construction and maintenance of the Centre, proved to be costly. Very little money for such activities came from government sources. Since the inception of the Society, a major component of the raising of funds had been through deaf 'Collectors' who travelled the length and breadth of NSW on door-knocking appeals for private donations. By the 1980s Collectors had been done away with as the Society considered it inappropriate to draw on 'sympathy' as a source of financial revenue. But the demise of Collectors came about at a time when demands on funds were high and the maintenance of the new Centre in which the Society took such pride was a serious problem in the making.

Yet despite the significant costs of maintenance, throughout the 1970s and '80s, the Stanmore Deaf Centre continued to grow and to provide the Deaf Community with services and activities social, cultural and sporting. And these services had a significant personal impact on those who benefited from them. Colin Allen remembers:

Growing up I spent a lot of my time at Stanmore. The Theatre of the Deaf, the drama classes were there - from 13 or 14 onwards I was involved in that, including a performance when Sir Roden Cutler came to open Stanmore... even my 21st birthday was held there. It was truly my second home.

CAllen006 14:45

Tony Clews, today still an important player in deaf sporting organisations, remembers:

Back then lots of people wanted to join Deaf Club for sport.... We had maybe 12-14 different clubs. All of them very strong. I remember back then we'd have 20 people in a swimming team, 2 cricket teams – scores of players for squash, men's and women's basketball teams, tennis, everything. Lots and lots of sports. I think back then deaf people relied on sports the way hearing people rely on music. It's where you feel comfortable.

Clews342 00:26

The establishment of adult education classes and training at Stanmore was also important to a community which suffered then and until very recently from substandard educational experiences with the consequent curtailment of employment opportunities. John Ferris remembers:

... I was lucky enough to get a Churchill fellowship ... that really ... changed my approach quite dramatically... [Overseas] I saw some wonderful programmes. ... it became very apparent a lot more could be given to deaf people with the potential to do better, ... and that included everybody. ... I started leadership training programmes for deaf people, based on programmes I'd seen overseas, based on programmes I was involved in here with hearing people. Like Adult Education classes – that's still going. Leadership classes. ... It made a big difference.

Ferris001 23:12



John Ferris taking an Adult Education class in 1975

For many in the Deaf Community, it was the 'Deaf Club' that was the most valued activity of the Society. The 'Deaf Club' was one of a number of social groups run with support from the Deaf Society, using the organisation's hall as a venue for regular get-togethers.

Rebecca Ladd who began work at the Deaf Society as a Social Educator in 1986 and eventually became Executive Director, remembers:

[The Deaf Club] ... was run by small group of deaf people. The night to go to the Deaf Club was Friday night. That was big. There was a couple of people, Alan and Marion Fairweather ... and they were famous for their cheese toasties [laughs] – so it was very simple fare. The Deaf Club as it was known then went through periods of attracting lots of people to virtually no-one.

Ladd305 26:16

For many, the Stanmore Deaf Club also provided education on an informal level. Because for many deaf people, the banning of Sign Language in their schooling had resulted in poor educational attainment, they had not been able to learn the basics of such things as financial management, current affairs and even parenting skills.

Here, Tony Clews reflects on how the Stanmore Deaf Club met some of the educational needs of the Community:

I'd walk into Deaf Club – over there a group would be signing, another over there – one group would be signing about banks, say, maybe about home loans. They'd talk and talk, share details, and just by watching I'd learn those things. It was an education.

Clews342 13:50



Staff of the Deaf Club at the Bar in Stanmore

The Deaf Club served as a place of home-like cultural safety and comfort where the transmission of culture and language could happen from one generation to the next.<sup>10</sup>

Stanmore felt like our real home.... Maybe I can't quite articulate it... Many people came to Deaf Club because they felt they could rest easy, we could comfortably chat in our own language, share a lot of things like issues at home or at work, frustrations – we could get them all out and chat about it and provide solutions or ideas – that's more like what a 'home' is.

Clews342 11:10

When the Deaf Club acquired a license to serve alcohol, it became an even more popular place for socialising. Julia Allen worked the Deaf Club's bar and remembers:

We had bottles and cans and mixed spirits too. We were strict because some deaf people were famous for bringing the house down when they'd had too much... deaf culture is loud!

JAllen002 21:40

In the 1980s, an unprecedented politicisation of deafness brought changes in the relationship of the Deaf Community and the Deaf Society. John Ferris sees a turning away by the Deaf Community from reliance on the Society beginning in the International Year of the Disabled Persons, 1981.<sup>11</sup> Internationally there were movements for deaf self-determination and empowerment whilst at home, Australian Sign Language (Auslan) was gaining recognition as a legitimate language. And as deaf and hearing members of the Deaf Community gradually began

<sup>10</sup> Van Steenwyk, I. *Going, going, but not gone: the impact of social and technological influences on the Australian Deaf community*. 2009

<sup>11</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW, 2013 'Stanmore to Parramatta Oral History Project' John Ferris Interview, Ferris001 17.15

to understand the politics of deafness, these awakenings were to have a considerable influence on the future of the Stanmore Deaf Centre.

The growing momentum of change within the Deaf Society of NSW was summed up by Ken Tribe as a move from 'Paternalism to Partnership'. As John Ferris wrote in the *Silent Messenger* in 1980:

The change in attitudes has been a gradual one becoming more marked in the last decade and particularly noticeable since the Deaf Centre, Stanmore has been functioning. ... here was a place of which [deaf people] could be justifiably proud, a place to which they would contribute and determine how it should be utilised.

Deaf people are accepting new responsibilities and the Deaf Community is benefiting from this; staff attitudes have changed considerably and there is now an overall feeling on their part of working with deaf people rather than for them; ... Many of the roles previously undertaken by welfare staff are now undertaken by deaf people. The recent announcement by the Board of Management to enlarge its membership to enable deaf people to become fully participating members of the Board is a significant milestone in the emancipation of members of the Deaf Community.

Of course, the Society still has its critics; there are many who believe that there should be no such thing as a "Deaf Community" often referring to it as a "deaf ghetto" – ...[however] the Deaf Community ... encompasses the whole range of intellect, attitudes, socio-economic situations and opportunities that the community at large offers the "hearing" and like any minority group it has developed resources of a local, national and even international stature to meet its needs thus offering a very full and satisfying life to those who choose to become part of it. Without these opportunities many deaf people would be as flotsam floating on the tide of community non-acceptance.

...There is a long way further to go and the "partnership approach" to the difficulties ahead must be even further developed.<sup>12</sup>

Rebecca Ladd remembers an incident with the Society's Board prior to the election of deaf Board members:

The Board at that time, didn't have a real awareness of deaf people's life experience and I think just couldn't identify with it. It really came home to me for example the Deaf Seniors were thinking about ... increasing their entrance fee to their club from \$1 to \$1.20 – that caused a big furor in the Deaf Community, 'How can you be putting that up, that's a large increase etc.' The Board just, that was totally outside the realm of their experience. They just couldn't identify with the issues that were associated with that at all because they were not in that situation of being on reasonably low incomes and having to scratch for every penny. The composition of the Board has changed since then, and that's not necessarily a criticism of the Board anyway it's just that ... a lot of them were not familiar with the stakeholders they were serving.

Ladd306 06:20

Colin Allen, who later took a very active role on the Society's Board also recalls the politics of this period:

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<sup>12</sup> J.L. Ferris, 1980, 'From Paternalism to Partnership', *The Silent Messenger*. February 1980 p.1-2

I can remember how the Deaf Community was a bit rebellious about the Deaf Society not letting deaf people on the Board. I remember there was only one person on the Board at that time – Dot Shaw ... Well, at that time the theatre of the deaf was becoming very successful, and young deaf people were breaking the tradition of submission.... Deaf people were starting to challenge the control of the Deaf Society.

CAllen007 06:10

Under Ken Tribe's Chairmanship changes were made to promote the involvement of Deaf Community members in the Board.<sup>13</sup> But effective change in power relations was slow. Rebecca Ladd remembers the beginning of deaf representation on the Society's Board in a less than favourable light:

Certainly in Bob Quail's [Chief Executive 1973 - 1988] time there were a couple of deaf representatives but they were reasonably tokenistic ... unless you have ... strength in numbers it's very difficult as one deaf person to advocate against a group of hearing people that may have a different view to you ... We had a Chair and a number of his cronies were on the Board - you couldn't raise that with the Chair to get change to occur. ... At one point, ... we had a Board which was primarily made up of the Chairperson and a lot of his friends. ... I remember a Board member saying "Well, it would be good if we learnt one sign at each Board meeting" with the thought that then they'd be able to communicate with the Deaf Community! Now, ... that's unrealistic in the extreme. ... The Chair was a great wit, was extremely well read but miles above particularly the deaf people on the Board so Board meetings would go at the rate of knots, the interpreters would be having difficulty keeping up and even being familiar with the content. It was often very esoteric comments and in-jokes that he would make and deaf people on the Board would have no idea what was happening. ... [The Board] were people that didn't really know anything about deafness with a couple of tokenistic deaf people who I don't think ever said much.

Ladd308 03:44

Adam Salzer, now a business consultant, began his involvement with the Deaf Society as a director of the NSW Theatre of the Deaf. He was elected a Board member in the early period of deaf representation:

[In terms of the trainee Board members] ... with deafness, there are some [hearing] people that talk in a way and communicate in a way that is really difficult for deaf people to understand – highly intellectual, fast, word plays, complex structures - and that was the vernacular of the Board. So there was a need to do training both ways. Because the Deaf had been fairly downtrodden, I brought back the first sign for repression. They'd never seen the sign for 'repression' ... which is your thumb sticking up and then you bash your thumb downwards. ... So they were starting to understand these things and to realise that their betters were not necessarily their betters. But they had to learn that you can't just come on to a Board and drop the standard of the Board; it was a high standard Board. So we had to bring them up to speed, which was learn how to behave on a Board, as well as teach the rest of the Board how to behave correctly. Now that was easier when I became Chairman. Ken Tribe was a nice man and the rest of it, but really, he was of the old school.

Salzer 08:42

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<sup>13</sup> Bennet, G. 2011, *More than Music* Australian Music Centre, Sydney p. 100

It was at this time also that vandals set fire to the administration area of the Deaf Centre destroying 80 years of stringently kept welfare files on members of the Deaf Community, an act of destruction that some say was a timely declaration of deaf independence. Sharon Everson remembers speculation about the culprits at the time:

I walked in and there had been this fire in the office. The whole office area had been gutted by fire. The person or person's unknown had broken into the filing room. ... They'd pulled all the drawers out of the filing cabinet and laid paper that way [demonstrates], so when they'd lit they'd actually burn. Which I think is very clever, if you're an arsonist. And then they'd shut the door behind them. The fire door held and held and held but eventually the heat got so intense that it cracked the glass in the ceiling and it burnt out all they office. ... Everything was soggy. All the records were gone. ... It was probably really good as well because the files were horrible. They were kept by the welfare workers, and everytime a deaf person would come and see a welfare worker, they'd make a note about whatever. A lot of it was very judgmental information. I think that's probably why the fire. Probably people had information in those files and just had enough! ... but I think we sort of grew up as an organisation and we don't keep information like that.

Everson002 06:53

It was also in the late 1980s that the Society's Board decided to close Gordon Davis House in favour of placing residents in community housing in order to '...keep us abreast of modern thinking in relation to residential care services and will allow the optimum of independence to be fostered in each resident'.<sup>14</sup> This was in line with the prevailing trend towards mainstreaming rather than segregating people with 'disabilities'.

Then in 1986, after 33 years of constant activity the Deaf General Committee was disbanded, 'With the trend towards greater self determination by members of the Deaf Community well established, and with deaf representatives sitting on the Board of Management of the Society, the format of the Deaf General Committee was no longer appropriate'.<sup>15</sup> The Committee's responsibilities were then shared by the newly formed NSW Council of the Deaf, The NSW Deaf Sports Association and the Stanmore Deaf Recreation Club. Almost immediately, the Stanmore Deaf Recreation Club (SDRC), now responsible for Friday night activities in the Centre, revoked the custom of having Welfare Workers (newly renamed Community Workers) on 'duty' at the Centre's deaf social events.<sup>16</sup>

## ***Big Changes Ahead***

It was in the late 1980s that the Society, under the executive leadership of Anne Mac Rae, began flagging to the Board of Management that it would be prudent to examine the organisation's financial predicament. The Society had been experiencing operating deficits since 1976 with the cumulative effect in 1988 of these deficits resulting in a \$2,677,556 loss. Minutes from the Board of Management's Extraordinary General Meeting in 1989 report that in order to meet these operating deficits the Society had been relying on funds from bequests and legacies, selling assets and making staff cuts. Sharon Everson, by that time holding a management position in the Society, explains:

The Deaf Society had gone through some extremely difficult financial situations. I believe most of it was to do with trying to give people everything they wanted. At that stage, we didn't have an accrual based accounting system, the budgeting wasn't forecast well. When I

<sup>14</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW, 1986, 'Gordon Davis House Closing', *The Silent Messenger*.

<sup>15</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW, April 1986, 'Big Changes in Deaf Committee Structures', *The Silent Messenger*, p. 1-2

<sup>16</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW, May 1986, 'Friday Night Changes', *The Silent Messenger*. p. 9

started work we owned Montague Gardens, a huge mansion in Stanmore,... a block of units next door called Hollingworth flats,... we owned all the land at Stanmore, we owned the Nursing Home, the Hostel, the Stanmore Centre, we owned a patch of land between the Hostel and the Stanmore building itself, we owned a building at Harris Park, and a we owned a building at North Sydney. So within probably the first 10, 15 years I worked there, we'd lost everything, we'd sold everything. Every year they'd be a deficit, for example \$360,000 deficit – that's millions of dollars today. So they'd have to sell off an asset to pay for that deficit in order to keep going.

Everson003 06:21

Adam Salzer recalls further details of the situation:

The cost of running the bowling green was monumental and used a little but would it be better to actually share a bowling green with someone else? .... The nursing home was too small to run, ... the government wouldn't fund it, and we just couldn't keep it going. It was a tough time, a tough time. Because the danger was that we were going to go bankrupt. All the deaf societies were going through same thing; they had all gone into the same thing of large community areas building these large structures and then funding and the society itself had changed, (creating) a situation of large losses, people not necessarily going to community areas because they wanted community facilities closer to where they live, starting to branch out and then you were left with these white elephants and what do you do? ... There had been reserves that had been chipped away and chipped away and chipped away. ... The only thing that kept us going was the land. Eventually we had to get money out of the land to save money. Another thing to be aware of is at that stage the government had this theory that if you had bricks and mortar they wouldn't give you money. The idea was 'why should we give you money if you're sitting on millions in the land?' ... There was a whole lot of other bigger contexts that we were wrestling with during this period.

Salzer 23:03

Sharon Everson is also able to shed light on some of the financial complexities faced by the Society at this time:



Anne Mac Rae joined the Deaf Society. The first thing she did was to get some government funding to have independent reviews. KMPG came and they did a financial audit, they looked at all the assets, the financial records for a few years and -- it was very, very bleak. What exacerbated the problem was that years before, we built the Nursing Home. There's this thing called deficit funding, so whatever the Nursing Home cost to run, the government funded you for whatever you lost. Then of course they changed all that ... everything had changed. We'd gone from the '70s into the late '80s, things had just changed.

Everson003 07:43

Anne Mac Rae

After such audits and reviews, Anne Mac Rae signalled that it 'would be necessary for the Deaf Community to decide whether it was more important to spend money on services or money on centres as it may not be possible to do both' and suggested 'that perhaps the time had come for the Deaf Community to have a meeting place or club separate from the Society with the Society providing management assistance, if necessary, and as required.'<sup>17</sup> The AGM Minutes from 1989 state that 'whilst the Stanmore Centre had continued to provide a meeting venue for the Deaf Community, there was a growth in social groups throughout metropolitan Sydney and as a result the Stanmore Centre was being used less and less'. The meeting's Chairman went on to say that 'whilst the net operating deficit for the year had been contained to \$300,848 ... it was of concern that the costs of maintaining the Stanmore Centre totalled \$150,591 representing over 50% of the total net operating deficit' concluding 'that this situation was unsustainable given that there were insufficient funds to cover the costs of such essential services as interpreters etc.'<sup>18</sup>

To some it appeared the Stanmore Centre was not being used as it had been:

We had a full size bowling green, we had a squash court, we had billiard tables. How many things do deaf people all need in the one spot? I believe that was back from the olden days when people who were deaf were probably shy to be seen out with hearing people – but by that stage more young people were going to local RSL clubs than they were coming to Stanmore.

Everson003 10:04

The Board of the Deaf Society implemented a financially driven Corporate Plan in 1989 which required the Society to be 'a much smaller organisation with a focus on the provision of professional support services to the Deaf Community on a decentralised model, education and training for both the Deaf Community and the general community as well as an advocate working in conjunction with the NSWAD'<sup>19</sup> [NSW Association of the Deaf].

In order to achieve this and save the Society from bankruptcy, it was decided that the Stanmore complex would need to be sold, which it duly was, to Newington College in 1995.

But it wasn't only the Stanmore building that was putting the organisation under strain. The Society's regional centres in Newcastle and Wollongong were facing a similar predicament to that of the Sydney Deaf Centre and according to minutes of Board Meetings in 1989, 'the Newcastle Deaf Community had accepted that the Centre at Newcastle would be disposed of subject to the income earned on funds realised from the sale of the premises [which will] be used to provide services and an alternative meeting place.'<sup>20</sup>

John Ferris who worked in the Society's Newcastle Branch out of 'Blackhall House' for over 10 years remembers:

When Blackall house was sold [it was very] traumatic because Blackall was in the city, it was pretty central. ... It had been their [Newcastle deaf people's] 'home', in inverted commas, for many years.

Ferris003 11:20

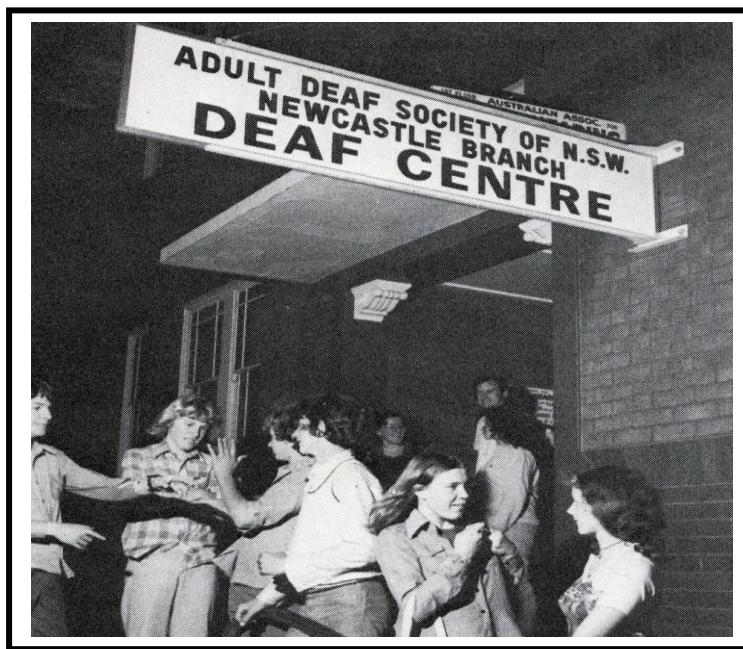
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<sup>17</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW, (1988 – 1993) Board Meeting Minutes 4/88 - 2/93 *Extraordinary General Meeting Minutes*, June 1989

<sup>18</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (1989) *Annual General Meeting Minutes*, November 1989 Sydney

<sup>19</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (1992) *Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Directors*, March 1992 Sydney

<sup>20</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (1989) *Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting*, December 1989 (Item 6.1) Sydney



Newcastle Deaf Community outside Blackhall House in 1975

In the same situation was the Wollongong Deaf Community with their 'Coniston Centre' put up for sale by the Society. Those from the Wollongong Deaf Community however were so opposed to the sale that they began a public campaign to save it, at one time staging a protest outside the Stanmore Centre whilst a Board meeting was in progress.<sup>21</sup>

When the Wollongong premises were put on the market, we sent out a letter and arranged a bus trip to Sydney to protest, which we did, with placards and a lot of noise...there was one police officer there, pacing up and down...Adam Salzer and the Board president came down but the deaf people were really furious. We were there from 8 o'clock until about 12 o'clock, and the neighbours weren't at all happy about the noise.

Boyle000 23:00

The sale of the Stanmore Deaf Centre however was not met with such resistance by the Sydney Deaf Community.

It's not as though there were any protests or a group forming and trying to prevent the sale which has happened in other states. I think because they weren't good at mobilizing. ... I don't remember there being lots of open consultation. I'm sure if you read the Annual Reports they will say that there was lots of consultations... but I don't remember large consultations where people really had their say. ... It's about that power imbalance that occurs between hearing people and deaf people and in the main it is difficult for deaf people to fight against a change that they don't like because they don't necessarily have the skills to do that effectively when they're competing with people that are working in the business world as a lot of the Board of Directors are.

Ladd306 17:00

<sup>21</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (1991) *Minutes of meeting of the Board of Directors*, February 1991 (Item 5.2 Wollongong Centre – Sale) Sydney

Although the Coniston Centre in Wollongong was sold, Trevor Boyle remembers the difference between those who resisted and those who didn't:

When it closed, we were frustrated. Later at gatherings they [Sydney Deaf Community] would complain about the closure. But I said they should have fought, done the work. But they just backed off. Come on! Protest! March on the place! Lobby the government! But deaf people just ... it was hard. We did it in Wollongong, but they gave up in Sydney. And they still talk about how much they miss Stanmore now.

Boyle001 11:00

To deal with the planning and consequences of the sale of Stanmore, three subcommittees of the Board were established - they were the Nursing Home and Hostel, the Administrative and the Deaf Community Centre Subcommittees.<sup>22</sup>

The Nursing Home and Hostel Subcommittee relocated residents from Lonsdale Hostel to Blacktown's Mullauna Lodge whilst those from Lonsdale Nursing Home were relocated to Parramatta Nursing Home. The Society provided financial assistance to residents unable to pay full entry fee to Mullauna Lodge and staff there were given Deafness Awareness Training.

Government was going through their own area of rationalisation, of 'How much will we pay per bed?'. It was a period of movement out of government into the private sector. The nursing homes and old people's homes were emerging and government was saying, 'We won't pay \$200,000 per bed anymore, we'll outsource and give them [\$]100[,000] per bed.' So this gave rise to these large retirement villages which were starting to emerge. So we went to one of these large retirement villages and said if you put in proper deaf support structures, we will move our people in with yours, so we kept the community somewhat together as we did the transition. So, it was a change in economic rationalism that was bigger than we were.

Adam Salzer 26:25

Rebecca Ladd reflects on what was lost and gained by moving the Stanmore aged care residents to Mullauna:

There's no doubt that Mullauna Village had all the modern facilities and beautiful surrounds ... but if you asked most people,... it didn't have that Deaf Feel that they so loved at Stanmore. There were efforts made to ensure that there was a link between the Deaf Society and Mullauna Village ... there's been a Deaf Liaison Officer but I don't know that that's been altogether successful. ... A very simple survey [was done] and the main thing was ... that they liked the food. ... In the whole move ... the Deaf Society lost some of its contact with the grassroots Deaf Community.

Ladd306 22:10

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<sup>22</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (1993) *Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors October, 1993* Sydney



Lonsdale House Patient with Nurse

Tony Clews' understanding of the impact on the Aged Care and Nursing Home residents is as follows:

I knew a few deaf people at Stanmore who moved to Blacktown nursing home. Most of them accepted it – they had to really, they were forced to, so to speak.... The older generation used to be able to mix with the younger generation at Stanmore – have a chat – but now at Blacktown – there's nothing there for them – they feel like a prisoners.

Clews001 01:40

### ***The Sale of Stanmore and the Move to Parramatta***

The Deaf Society's relationship with the Parramatta area was first established in 1973 with a Regional Centre (the first of the Society's Centres to be managed by a committee of elected deaf people) set up in Harris Park.<sup>23</sup>

We had this regional centre at Harris Park. .... It was a big hall and we opened it up on two days a week for part time - lots of activities held there ... and a welfare worker would go and sit there for the afternoon two days a week and people ... would come in and do what they had to do. Not all that successful I don't think.

Ferris004 26:30 – (Cont) Ferris005 00:00

In any case, when the Stanmore Complex was sold, Parramatta was recognised as being a more convenient area for a significant proportion of the Deaf Community, the majority of whom lived in the western suburbs of Sydney and so it was to Parramatta that the organisation decided to move its headquarters.

The Society also wanted the new offices to provide 'more pleasant and private [offices] for Deaf clients attending appointments with the Society's professional staff.'<sup>24</sup> Rented offices in Macquarie Street, Parramatta were officially opened in 1995 and the move was represented by

<sup>23</sup> The Adult Deaf and Dumb Society of NSW, June 1973 'Parramatta Regional Centre' *The Silent Messenger*, p. 4

<sup>24</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW Society, 1995 *Annual Report 1995*, Sydney p.6

the Society as 'better addressing the needs of deaf people throughout the state, particularly young people and those in country areas'.<sup>25</sup>

However, it was a controversial move which still evokes strong opinions and feelings today:

The Deaf Community didn't have an understanding of what it took to upkeep that Centre. I mean, it was a sensible business decision. It was definitely the right thing to do in terms of realising the assets. But the ramifications socially for people was a very different thing. ... I still sometimes hear now in doing interpreting work, we're talking nearly 20 years later, I still hear, "Isn't it a shame we don't have Stanmore anymore".

Ladd306 16:20

People felt like [Stanmore] was their building. ... People harked back to, well they had a barbecue or some kind of fundraising event early on when money was being raised to build Stanmore ... and so therefore they had contributed to the building of the building and so it was theirs. ... They felt quite robbed, ... 'You've take away something that's actually ours – so what are we getting back in return?' ... That's genuinely what they believed, that it was their building and that they had a right to keep it. Whereas I don't think they've ever had that feeling about Parramatta.

Ladd306 14:20

While people were sad to see Stanmore go, I don't think they actually realised the impact that potentially it might have in their lives going into the future.

Ladd305 07:39

One of the biggest impacts of the move was brought about by the separation of services at the Society's Parramatta offices from the social activities to be managed by the Deaf Community 'Stanmore Deaf Recreation Club'. For some time the Society had '...felt that the Deaf Community should be running its own affairs, with the Deaf Society providing or advocating for professional services for deaf people and in the end the Deaf Community... should have its own organisation to manage the social/recreational needs of the community and eventually own its own property.'<sup>26</sup>

Trevor Maggs was appointed Deaf Community Liaison Officer to consult with the Deaf Community about the impact of severing the Deaf Club from the Society and the establishment of a new and independent Club. Here, Trevor Maggs provides his view of the process involved:

The hearing people made the decision. There was no conversation with the Deaf Community beforehand. Yes, they did try to explain, but they had their processes and things they had to check off, but it didn't really penetrate the Deaf Community. The Deaf Community has unique needs and I don't think the Deaf Society really met those needs. They just said, "unfortunately it's too expensive to run it and we have to move". The process of making the decision, researching things... I was involved as liaison officer. I was told information and paid to follow a process, but I don't think it really met the needs of the community, no. I had to do my duty, but personally I somewhat disagreed.

Maggs000 08:15

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<sup>25</sup> ibid p. 8

<sup>26</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW, 1990 *Meeting Summary with Representatives of Board of DSNSW, SDRC, NSWDSA & NSWAD*, Sydney

Colin Allen sees what happened differently:

I believe that process was VERY clear and transparent to the Deaf Community, with community consultation, and a project officer employed to make sure that each different club was informed. They explained that Deaf Society finance at that time was difficult, and talked with people about how they saw the future, where they would go if Stanmore were sold, and so on – lots of research. I believe the response was very positive about the possibility of taking responsibility to lead their own community.

CAllen007 14:15

A feasibility study was conducted resulting in a report and it was decided that the Society would provide funds towards the establishment of a Deaf Community Club for a period of up to five years.

...the report was more like something to justify the Deaf Society Board from the point of view of expenses. Yes, I understand as a professional person myself that it was not viable to continue with Stanmore making those kinds of losses. You can't afford that. I understand that. I am still sure that you could have a better way, through really thorough consultation. But nothing. There was lots of explaining of information, like a machine, so that everyone understood, but it was in such a rush. Then the data was sent off to justify their decision.

Maggs000 19:15

With the support of the Deaf Society, members of the NSW Council of the Deaf, The NSW Deaf Sports Association and of course the Stanmore Deaf Recreation Club (SDRC) joined together and eventually settled on the Lidcombe Memorial RSL Bowling Club (LMBC) as their new Club venue.

Julia Allen by this time a member of the SDRC management remembers the LMBC:

We moved to Lidcombe, LMBC... Lidcombe Memorial Bowling Club. It was a bit ugly, a fantastic bar... two pool tables. It had the bar and everything, but it just wasn't the same, a bit dilapidated.... It didn't have the deaf spirit. It was ok as a temporary place while we looked for somewhere else, but people sort of vanished... after a while we felt no connection to it... it wasn't a great environment.

JAllen002 18:30

In 1995 an elected deaf Board took over management of the LMBC and the Deaf Society approved a \$60,000 grant which allowed the Club to start its operations debt-free.<sup>27</sup> However, not long after reopening as the 'Deaf Club' the LMBC was facing difficulties. By 1996 the accounts showed a significant operating loss and major repairs to the building were needed requiring substantial expenditure. Administrative assistance was sought by the Club from the Society and a Trainee Manager position was briefly supported by the Deaf Society but, nevertheless, the Club's accounts when audited were incorrect.<sup>28</sup>

Tony Clews talks about the fact that many deaf people did not have the required skills for independently running a venue and club:

It wasn't really that deaf people were "lost", it's more like they just didn't have the skills to run such a big club. We had bad habits from years of being under the control of the welfare officers, and then we

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<sup>27</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW, 1996 *Annual Report 1996* 'Deaf Community Centre'. P. 11

<sup>28</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (1997) *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, June 1997 Sydney

were out on our own, like being in the dark, without knowing how to do all the things like finance. The committee had a real passion for the deaf club but what they didn't have was a business mentality – they weren't trained. It felt like they were sent off on purpose to fend for themselves – and it failed.

Clews342 09:05

Significantly, one of the main problems facing the Club seemed to be lack of support from the Deaf Community at large. Between 1995 and 1997, the Club's membership fell from 250 to 60.<sup>29</sup> It appeared that younger people no longer used the Club for social get-togethers and older deaf people could not afford the membership fees and were physically unable to carry out the repairs and maintenance. There are various reasons given for the gradual decline in numbers at the Deaf Club, including its shabbiness and lack of visual appeal.

Ironically, the Society's success at Stanmore in education and advocacy, leading to better education and job opportunities for deaf people may have been another. Tony Clews believes a contributing factor to a demise in numbers at the Club was the increasing move by some deaf people into white collar jobs:

We had in the past a strong grass roots membership of the community and then there was another group who wanted to become more professional, so the community became smaller. Those wanting to be professional didn't want to mix with the more grassroots part of the community; they had a 'not my cup of tea' attitude, and very quickly the community became smaller.

Clews343 01:00

Both Tony Clews and Colin Allen believe that the advance in communication technology greatly impacted the community at this time:

Also at that time, communication technology was changing, TTY, the National Relay Service. Not yet SMS, but Fax. Everyone knew that Stanmore was always open on Friday night and you physically went there to exchange information.... Even if people felt sick, they still went, to pass on messages. I've seen my mother do that. It was a strong community commitment to each other. By the time of the LMBC there was TTY, the relay service, and fax, and that could have contributed [to the Club's demise].

CAllen007 20:45



A TTY Machine owned by the Deaf Society

<sup>29</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (1997) *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, August 1997 Sydney

At the same time, technology came along, and maybe that played a part in dispersing the community, and them losing interest in the club.... For example when TTY came in we could call another deaf person and meet them at the cinema. Before that, you had no choice but to meet at the Deaf Club, and make the appointment there. Now we have SMS, everything is easier, and there's 'Face Time' for chatting in Auslan via your phone...

Clews342 09:55

Shirley Liu is 21 years old and a member of the Sydney Deaf Community who never experienced the Deaf Club at Stanmore. Here, she talks about how young deaf people socialise:

Technology has positives and negatives. On the positive side, these developments make it easier to do things - you just send an SMS rather than having to drive to somewhere to see them. Facebook, Social Media, so easy. But on the negative side it means you don't make the effort to meet face to face. Much less than before. Deaf people used to really make an effort, now you just send a text message, and you can make an excuse and not turn up if you don't feel like it.

Liu133 08:10

In 1997 the Deaf Society advised the Board of the LMBC that it would no longer provide support for the Club as of the end of the next financial year<sup>30</sup> but that it would set money aside to provide for a future Deaf Community Centre should a feasible proposal be put forward. This was met with disappointment and anger by some in the Community, particularly Senior members who were 'of the view that they "did their bit" at Stanmore over many years and it was the responsibility of the Deaf Society to ensure that a meeting place [be] available'.<sup>31</sup> According to Tony Clews:

When the deaf club closed, the Deaf Society put aside \$100,000 for the set up of a future club. They had a lot of criteria, like setting up a business plan, etc. It's interesting that no one has got the funding yet. Only small amounts have been used. There have been attempts, but they have all folded. That shows that deaf people want a deaf club, but we don't have the people to run a deaf centre, or the money.

Clews343 14:10

Rebecca Ladd adds that:

[...] Very few deaf people would have the skills to write a report that would be approved by the Board of Directors...also, ... if they had highflying jobs within the mainstream community, who has time then to get together to put in the effort to be doing that kind of thing? ... There was the promises and ... genuine commitment that another Deaf Club would be set up but again, unrealistic expectations of that deaf people are going to have management responsibility for it and the Deaf Society will support it in its initial phases but with the expectation that deaf people will take over in the long run. The majority of the Deaf Community don't have managerial experience, they certainly don't have financial capability, as a generalization. ... They haven't had the education to have the foundation to be able to do that. So, in some ways it was doomed to failure from the start, the social club.

Ladd306 05:30

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<sup>30</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (1997) *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, October 1997 (Item Deaf Community Centre - LMBC) Sydney

<sup>31</sup> ibid August 1997

In 1998, the LMBC Club was placed into Voluntary Liquidation. In 1999 a Deaf Club at Homebush opened and closed soon after, apparently 'due to lack of volunteers, ... and low attendance of members of the Deaf Community'.<sup>32</sup> Trevor Maggs saw the same demise of the Deaf Club in his hometown of Adelaide and believes it is a 'global trend'.<sup>33</sup> As does Tony Clews who in his international travels learned of the closure of other deaf clubs overseas "for financial reasons" as well as because of the time-consuming professional jobs now available to those deaf people who might once have been involved.



Lidcombe Memorial Bowling Club

Some money earmarked by the Deaf Society for a Community Centre later went into supporting the Northern Rivers Deaf Centre<sup>34</sup> and the Coffs Harbour Deaf Community Working Group.<sup>35</sup> There is still an amount of approximately \$96,000 earmarked for the same purpose. Currently, a small independent Deaf Club meets monthly at Parramatta RSL and Redfern RSL and, more generally, social gatherings in the Deaf Community are decentralised.

Where can people socialise now? .... For entertainment, deaf poker club is something I go to once a month. It's called the Deaf Poker Home Tournament. But as for what else is on, I have no idea....I had a German friend visit and she was astonished... I said I KNOW people are out there, but WHERE ARE THEY? Where is the life? You can look and look and find nothing.... There's no lighthouse, no beacon to draw people together anymore.

Maggs002 00:30

### **Today's Deaf Society Headquarters in Parramatta**

Today's headquarters in Parramatta is the second premises occupied by the Deaf Society. Sharon Everson remembers that the first was not entirely suitable:

We first moved to Macquarie St. That building was owned by an elderly gentleman ... who charged us very reasonable rent. ... It was okay but it was pretty shabby, ... it was difficult, a bit like a rabbit warren. ... It was a bit sad. The Council actually then resumed the building. ... then Parramatta Council wouldn't spend money on it because their idea was to sell it to ... developers. It was part of the big Civic Place Parramatta 'Change for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' ....

Everson003 14:40

<sup>32</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (1999) *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, August 1999 (Item 9.5 Deaf Recreational Club – Homebush) Sydney

<sup>33</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW, 2013 'Stanmore to Parramatta Oral History Project' Trevor Maggs Interview Maggs000 04.30

<sup>34</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (2001) *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, June 2001 Sydney

<sup>35</sup> The Deaf Society of NSW (2002) *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, February 2002 (Item 8.3 Deaf Community Centres Funding) Sydney



The Deaf Society office building at Macquarie Street, Parramatta

Despite concerns about the move from some in the Deaf Society, the move to the new offices was memorable. Rebecca Ladd was there:

I remember when we moved into Parramatta, into the other office where we originally were in Parramatta ... some deaf people came quite long distances, to see where this new office was. ... If you looked at other disability providers or other organizations that are moving premises you don't usually see the clients turning up at the same time as you're moving. They weren't turning up to be provided with service, they were just interested to see where the new office was going to be. Again, that reflects the strong affiliation that people have to the place where the Deaf Society, or deaf services are provided.

Ladd305 06:15

In 2009 the Head Office of the Deaf Society, whilst remaining in Parramatta, relocated to Phillip Street where it is today.

We found this place – it was one of those God sends. .... [We] got the money to do those training rooms. The people here before us had gone broke in the Global Financial Crisis and left all the lovely furniture that matched. So things just fell together. ... Most people really enjoyed the move, ... it was very smooth.

Everson003 16:45

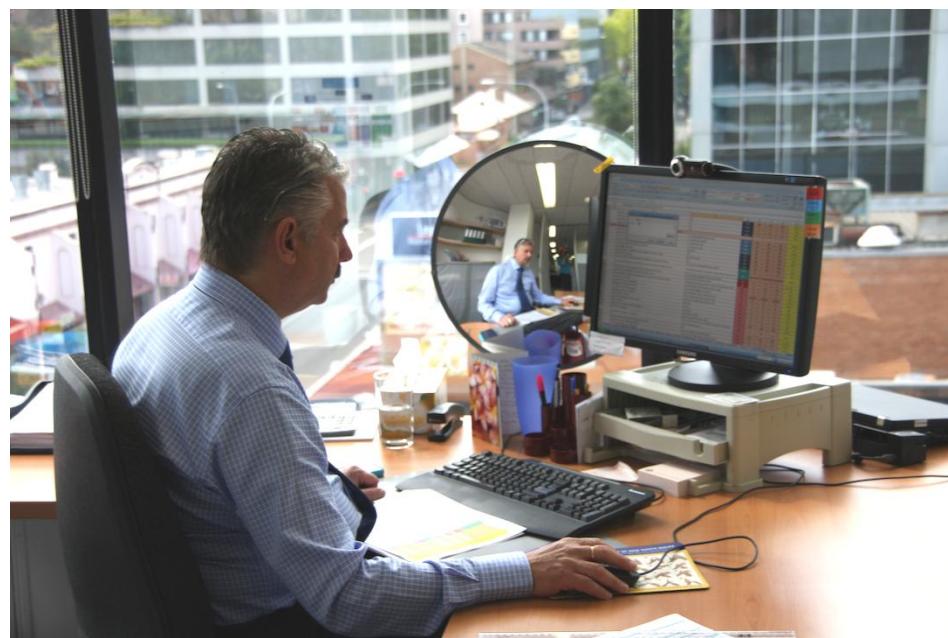


The current Deaf Society office building at Phillip Street, Parramatta

The changes in the new office were not only in its physical appearance, as Colin Allen discovered when he returned in 2009 from overseas work in deaf foreign aid. He took up work at the Deaf Society as Director of Services and considers the changed workplace he entered then:

It was amazing when I first saw the new office environment, because it was such a perfect match for deaf people's needs. Then working in the office, the percentage of deaf and hearing staff was very balanced, and the hearing people had all learnt to sign. That made my environment at the Deaf Society a great workplace. I would say 99% could communicate with each other compared to Stanmore when almost no one could sign, or, 15% of staff, and there were very few deaf people working there, because it was a segregated mentality driven by "you can't, you can't".

CAllen009 01:15



Colin Allen at work in his Deaf Society office

But the new Parramatta offices did not hold much appeal for some for whom 'Stanmore' had created a sense of belonging -- a 'spiritual homeland'. In particular, in the absence of a 'Deaf Club' on the premises, the Parramatta offices were simply that – just offices.

Rebecca Ladd attributes the community's lack of feeling for the Parramatta headquarters as arising from complex causes:

The crux of the difference [b/w Stanmore and Parra] is to do with the building. ... If you're not part of the Deaf Community you don't understand the importance those buildings have for deaf people. ... That feeling of being home – that's what was characterized by Stanmore. Now, why isn't it in Parramatta? Is it because it's part of an office block? ... Is it because it's not ... totally owned by the Deaf Community...? Was it the fact that the Deaf Community didn't have a Club within the Deaf Society's building? Is it just that at that time [1970s – 1990s] there was a much larger Deaf Community and a much stronger sense of culture and language ... whereas, as we know, it's diminishing because of the onset of new technologies.

Ladd308 22:55

Tony Clews who now works at the Society's offices in Phillip St concurs:

Parramatta is "just-a-place-I-go-to-work".... people come to the office and talk with us, and I know that the people who come could be 40 to 50% better off if there were a Deaf Club. But it's just an office. I don't care where it is – Parramatta or elsewhere – it makes no difference.

Clews343 25:30

Parramatta is only offices. No meetings or sports. They provide good support, but there is something missing.

Boyle001 12:45

I don't need the Deaf Society services. I am quite satisfied with my life, and I have access to everything, NABS for doctors appoints, technology, I'm well educated, literate, degrees, very independent. And life goes fast – I should make the time to come and say hello, but I don't have time. Later when I'm old I'll probably need something like interpreting access, but the world is better now in terms of access. I know there is still a long way to go but compared to 20, 30, 40 years ago, like in my parents' time, access was terrible, and they were always going to Deaf Club – that's where they got information. Now I can watch captioned news from 6pm to 6.30 and I am satisfied I know what is going on in the world. I have the grammar and the English to read the Sydney Morning Herald and understand that. I'm satisfied. I have family life and a stressful professional job, so when I go home I like to switch off.... I don't mean to ignore the Deaf Society... I'm here! I'm still a part of the Deaf Community – yay!

Maggs001 09:55

The younger generation who did not know Stanmore, appear to find Parramatta a good location:

Parramatta I think is good because most deaf people meet up here. There's good food, shops, transport – oh, and the Deaf Society is here too.

Liu133 04:45

...the old and younger generations have different perspectives. The older generation were probably happy to have the offices under the club, all in one.... The younger people, I don't think it would have met their needs.... the Australian Deaf Community is somewhat fragmented now. It would be good to have funding now to research demand again....That is changing now compared to 1994 because of technology. It would be good to find out now where the deaf people are and what they are doing, independent of having a Deaf Club.

Maggs002 05:30

Others see change in the Deaf Community as mirroring larger cultural and societal change:

When Stanmore moved to Parramatta, I felt that sports disintegrated very quickly. Maybe that was because there were more deaf people going into mainstream schools. I don't think it was just happening in the Deaf Community. In the hearing community too sport was dissolving – since 9/11 insurance costs skyrocketed and numbers diminished quickly, technology took over and things changed really fast.

Clews342 01:20

My understanding is that other ethnic groups are having the same problem. For example, the Italian community. At first, in a strange country, you get together, have your own club where you can speak your own language, enjoy the same food and humour, like the Deaf Community. Then government and society changes. Their children are marrying others in the community and over time things change.... Deaf people are marrying hearing people now too. The Deaf Community needs to step back far enough to see what is happening in other communities; I'm sure it is no different.

CAllen009 09:00

It's not just the Deaf Society, but society in general. It's more strict with things like insurance and policies. There are more rules, so people can't just come and sit in the office anymore. It's the same everywhere for everyone.

Clews344 01:20

There were so many of those volunteers that were through the Deaf General Committee. I just don't see that level of volunteering now. I think it's the same across the board with hearing people's organisations too. People have paid jobs, women work longer in the workforce, people have families, ... people just don't have that time to volunteer. I don't think we'll ever go back to that.

Everson002 02:47

It is becoming increasingly evident that Deaf Society of NSW shares the work focus typical of other organisations in today's more sophisticated society:

We are clearly a service provider, not a venue for people to come and chat.... We have offices, training rooms, that's all...

CAllen009 16:40

Young Shirley Liu reflects on her experience of engagement with the Society's offices and staff:

There are people around, but it depends on their appointments as to who is there... there's no socialising, nothing - they are all concentrating on their work!

Liu133 07:30

One of the main reasons given for the sale of the Stanmore complex and the move to Parramatta was to free up money to provide more services and particularly to make service provision more equitable for the NSW regional Deaf Community. There is some debate about whether this objective has been achieved:

A lot was made of, well, if we sell this building then the assets will be realised and we'll be able to put it into services. Now I'm not sure that that was totally carried through. It's that dilemma between ensuring sufficient retained earnings to be protected in case of a rainy day versus sufficient money so that you can do additional projects – but whether it was really invested in better services for the Deaf Community, I think that's somewhat questionable.

Ladd306 07:48

Julia Allen recently back from a job as Research Assistant for the Resilience to Natural Disasters Project, which required travelling regional NSW – reflects:

In Wollongong ... they rely a lot on the Deaf Society worker but she only works 2 days a week.... In Gosford the same, they rely on their one person in the Central Coast area.... Newcastle – also terrible. I remember there used to be a great Deaf Society staff in Newcastle but now there's just the one.

JAllen006 02:36

Whilst the Parramatta office provides services that hope to meet the current needs of the community, for many who knew and loved Stanmore, it seems that nothing can replace it. For others though, life goes on:

I understand sometimes it's lovely to have that tangible thing that's your heart, ... but those days won't happen again. So deaf people have to find their core, their heart and decide a different way to meet in order to continue that. And stop looking back and saying, 'Oh, we haven't got Stanmore anymore and that's why all these things [social, sporting] finished.' That's just a cop out as far as I'm concerned, just an excuse.

Everson003 11:17

...the generations see it differently. The older ones have lost something. The younger ones have better access, a better lifestyle. As a whole, together, the community has maybe lost something. I think one day deaf people will wake up and each think, I'm deaf, and everyone has gone. You need to feel like you belong, and that is missing – a big hole.

Maggs001 12:55

## **Findings**

In their accounts of the Deaf Society's Stanmore Centre and the Society's move to Parramatta, those who were interviewed reveal a range of information, feelings and opinions and, of course, not all interviewees have the same perspectives. However, significant points of agreement as well as difference emerge from their accounts.

- The move from the Deaf Society's old headquarters, Elizabeth House, in Sydney's CBD to the Stanmore Centre in an inner west suburb was a milestone in the history of Sydney's Deaf Community. The move occurred incrementally, first with the establishment of hostels which began in 1949, then facilities for the elderly in the 1960s, the transfer of the Society's headquarters to Stanmore in 1970 and finally the building of a purpose-built welfare centre which opened at 123 Cambridge Street in 1975. Within the Deaf Community the term "Stanmore" came to signify the Centre with all its adjacent buildings, services and activities.
- The change in headquarters from Elizabeth House, which is recalled as shabby, to the modern facilities of the Stanmore Centre seems to represent the growing self-esteem and confidence of members of the Deaf Community.
- Interviewees who remember the days before Stanmore recall the Society's Methodist church influence of moral rectitude and service to the needy. They emphasise the paternalistic attitudes and practices of the almost exclusively hearing staff and the extensive control they exercised over the lives of deaf people in the course of administering welfare services. These practices, including the keeping of detailed personal files, carried on into the early days of Stanmore until they came under challenge and were eventually transformed or abolished.
- Kenneth Tribe AC, Chair of the Board of the Deaf Society, is widely recognised as a major force behind the development of the Stanmore Complex as integral to his vision of the Society's move away from paternalism to deaf people having greater control over their own affairs. The Deaf General Committee had extensive input into the design of the Complex. The Centre was seen by many as a physical symbol of pride.
- Stanmore is recalled by all who were there as a very special place, and for some even as "home". It is remembered as a vibrant and all-embracing inter-generational meeting centre, filled with people of all ages and full of activities and services. These included a wide range of sporting clubs some of whose activities were catered for on site, a number of social clubs including the popular Deaf Club and its Friday evening 'Club Nights', the drama activities of the New South Wales Theatre of the Deaf which later became the Australian Theatre of the Deaf, various events and celebrations, and welfare programmes. An important aspect of the Centre was the provision of both formal and informal education and training for deaf people who, in general, had been unable to take advantage of social, recreational or educational facilities available to the wider hearing community.
- International Year of the Disabled Persons, 1981 is seen by some as significant in the transition of the Deaf Community to greater responsibilities within the society as well as an increased ability to move into the mainstream. The rise of social movements for self-determination and empowerment amongst women and minority groups, both in Australia and internationally, encouraged such change. In the 1980s, there was a restructuring of the Committees within the Deaf Community as within the Deaf Society positions on the Board of Management were created for deaf representation, 'Welfare Workers' became 'Community Workers' and deaf people as well as their hearing relatives began to be employed on staff, having previously been banned from such participation.
- By the end of the 1980s, the high financial cost of maintaining the building owned by the Society and running services and ambitious programs at Stanmore were becoming evident. The Deaf Society had limited sources of income and was selling property to meet deficits. At

the same time, deaf people were moving further into the mainstream within a changing society and changing technology. To save the Deaf Society from bankruptcy, the Board decided to reduce its activities to focus on providing professional support, educational and training services on a decentralised state model as well as advocacy for deaf people.

- The Board of the Society decided that the Stanmore Centre along with similar centres in Newcastle and Wollongong were to be sold. The residents of the Stanmore hostel and nursing home were relocated to mainstream facilities in Western Sydney. There are differences of opinion amongst interviewees about the degree of consultation with the wider Deaf Community which took place concerning this decision to sell and move. Some interviewees believe that, at that point in time, deaf people were not empowered, educated or skilled enough to make their wishes known. In any event, only the Wollongong Deaf Community mounted a protest. Most interviewees agree, however, that the closure of Stanmore was a sad loss. They express great nostalgia for the community that it provided and the building itself and some still feel angry about the change. Others, however, see that it was a necessary and beneficial decision, given the Society's financial position at that time and that the transformations taking place both in the Deaf Community and the wider Australian society made such a move inevitable.
- Because the majority of the Deaf Community lived in Western Sydney, in 1995 with the sale of Stanmore to neighbouring Newington College, the Deaf Society decided to move its advocacy and professional services to rented premises in Parramatta where it had previously opened a part-time and not altogether successful centre in Harris Park. The new Parramatta headquarters did not maintain social or recreational functions.
- Despite the Board's attempt to relocate and maintain the much loved Deaf Club, this important social aspect of Stanmore, now managed solely by members of the Deaf Community, failed to survive for a number of strongly felt and debated reasons. These include lack of support from the Deaf Community and the time-consuming white-collar employment opportunities newly available to members of the Deaf Community who might otherwise have provided grass roots leadership. In addition, all agree that the recent technological changes which opened up new avenues of communication for deaf people significantly decreased the necessity for personal social contact which was once so essential and facilitated by the Deaf Club.
- In 2009, the Deaf Society's Head Office was relocated from its first Parramatta premises in Macquarie Street to well-appointed offices in Phillip Street, but there is still a degree of debate within the Deaf Community about the office, including amongst those who work there but knew the old Stanmore. For some, it is a workplace devoid of a sense of Community purpose, whilst others rejoice in a work environment which provides a high standard of modern professional services and where there is a substantial proportion of deaf employees and the hearing employees can sign Auslan.
- For the younger members of the Deaf Community who never knew Stanmore and are integrated into the mainstream society and for those who see the changes as mirroring those in other minority communities within Australia, the nature of today's Deaf Society in Parramatta is an inevitable part of modern life. For others however there is a painful feeling of loss about Stanmore and with it the best times of their lives.

# Appendices

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## ***Chronology***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Event</b>
1913	The 'Adult Deaf and Dumb Society of NSW' is established.
1927	Board of Management make the purchase of Elizabeth House in 5 Elizabeth Street, Sydney.
1949	Gordon Davis House (Young Person Hostel) is opened in Stanmore, provides accommodation for young deaf people from country NSW.
1970	The Deaf Society Offices relocate temporarily to Dey House in Cambridge Street, Stanmore whilst the Stanmore Deaf Centre is being planned and constructed.
1970	Friday Night 'Club Nights' begin at Gordon Davis House at the instigation of the Deaf General Committee.
1973	A Hall in Harris Park is purchased to serve as a Western Area Regional Centre.
1974	The Foundation Stone for the Welfare Centre at Stanmore is laid.
1975	The Stanmore Deaf Centre is opened.
1978 (officially opened 1979)	Residents of aged care and nursing home facility 'Alfred Lonsdale House' in Strathfield are moved to the newly built nursing home/hostel 'Lonsdale House' in Stanmore. Adjacent to the Deaf Centre and Gordon Davis House it provides accommodation for 42 people.
Early 1980s	'Paternalism to Partnership' approach: the Deaf Community are accepting new responsibilities, the Board of Management are opening opportunities for deaf membership, deaf welfare officers are employed by the Society, sign language interpreting is professionalised, Auslan is legitimised.
1980	A fire in the Deaf Centre destroys welfare files.
1984	The Board of Management closes Gordon Davis House and places its residents in Community Housing.
1986	The Deaf General Committee is disbanded, replaced by the NSW Council of the Deaf, the NSW Deaf Sports Association and Stanmore Deaf Recreation Club.
1986	'Community Workers' (ex 'Welfare Workers') no longer attend 'Friday Nights' (Club Nights) and the Stanmore Deaf Recreation Club (SDRC) are responsible for Friday Night activities at the Centre.
1989	The Deaf Society has an annual deficit of \$300,000 of which half is the cost of maintaining the Stanmore Centre.
1990	The Deaf Society is in deficit of \$141,000 and acknowledges annual deficits the previous 15 years.
1990	The Society's Newcastle Centre 'Blackhall House' is sold.
1991	The Deaf Society's annual deficit is \$115,000
1991	The Deaf Society sells Wollongong's 'Coniston Centre' headquarters, but not without protest from the Wollongong Deaf Community.
1992	The Deaf Society's annual deficit is \$140,000
1992	The Board of Directors instigate a Corporate Plan which

	focuses on service provision, decentralisation, education & training.
1993	The Board of Directors develops three subcommittees to deal with sale of Stanmore; Nursing Home and Hostel, Deaf Community Centre & Administrative Subcommittees.
1994	The Board, under the leadership of Adam Salzer, creates Trainee Board Member positions.
March 1994	A Deaf Community Liaison Officer, Trevor Maggs, is employed to tackle the Deaf Community's the sale of Stanmore. Flyers and a survey are distributed throughout the Deaf Community.
April 1994	The Stanmore Complex is sold to Newington College.
October 1994	The Deaf Society move offices from Stanmore to Macquarie St, Parramatta (officially opened May, 1995).
February 1995	Residents of the Hostel are relocated to Mullauna Village, Blacktown.
December 1995	A new deaf Board of Directors takes over the Lidcombe RSL Memorial Bowling Club (LMBC) which reopens as the 'Deaf Club' in January, 1996.
May 1996	The Deaf Club operates at a loss of approx. \$11,000 since beginning operation.
August 1997	Membership numbers of Lidcombe Deaf Club dwindle from 250 to 60.
October 1997	The Deaf Society give the Board of Lidcombe Deaf Club notice that no financial support for the club will be given after Club's next financial year.
March 1998	Members of the LMBC resolve to place the Club into voluntary liquidation.
August 1999	A six month trial Deaf Club in Homebush closes due to low attendance and lack of volunteers.
December 2001	Concerns are held by the Deaf Society Board regarding financial management of Mullauna Village and its staff's inability to communicate with deaf residents.
2002	The Deaf Society grant the Coffs Harbour Working Group funds to establish a deaf Resource Centre. Financial support is also given to the Northern Rivers Deaf Centre and Deaf Seniors Group. This funding comes from the Deaf Community Centre Grant Provision.
2009	The Deaf Society headquarters are moved to Phillip St, Parramatta.
2013	The Deaf Society of NSW celebrates a Centenary as well as hosting the World Federation of the Deaf Conference in Sydney.

## ***Biographies of Interviewees***

**Colin Allen** was born into a deaf family in Sydney and was educated at North Rocks School for Deaf Children and Chatswood High School. After leaving school at the age of 16, Colin became an actor with the Australian Theatre of the Deaf. Colin has worked in a host of Deaf Community arenas including HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and setting up deaf organisations in developing countries. Colin attained a Diploma of Community Organisations and worked in international deaf communities for nine years. On returning to Australia, Colin took up the position of Director of Services with the Deaf Society of NSW where he continues to work as Senior Community Engagement Advisor. In 2011 Colin was elected President of the World Federation of the Deaf and 2013 was elected as Second Vice Chair of the International Disability Alliance.

**Julia Allen** comes from a deaf family and was born and raised in Sydney. Julia was schooled at Darlington School and completed her School Certificate through correspondence because there were no school interpreters at that time. On finishing school Julia wanted to be a receptionist but ended up working for the Commonwealth Bank where most deaf girls from Darlington were employed. Other jobs Julia has done include work as a driver, printer, administration officer, kitchen hand and mail sorter. Julia has been involved in many committees and organisations including Deaf Netball Australia and the NSW Association of the Deaf. In 2004 Julia won a 'Deaf Australian of the Year' award and is a life member of Deaf Netball Australia. Julia was involved in the making of Sign Bank Online (the Auslan Corpus) and was an editor of the deaf monthly publication, The Silent Messenger.

**Trevor Boyle** was born hearing and became deaf through meningitis at the age of 2. At 5 years old he became a boarder at the Darlington School where he was educated until the age of 16 when he went to a technical college to learn shipwright carpentry and joinery. Trevor then went to work at Garnock Engineering at BHP Shipping in Port Kembla for the next 43 years. Trevor was a member of the wrestling team at the Police Boy's Citizen Club for 13 years and involved in competitions around NSW and Australia. He also played squash for the NSW Deaf Squash team for which he was the President between 1979 and 1993. Trevor was also the President of the Campbelltown Deaf Golf Club for 12 years and the current president of Deaf Table Tennis NSW. Trevor represented Australian Table Tennis in the Deaflympics 2005. Trevor has 2 adult children, 4 grandchildren and 1 great grand daughter. Trevor is now married to Marcia Girke-Boyle and they enjoy caravanning together.

**Tony Clews** was born to deaf parents and educated at North Rocks School for the Deaf until the age of 10 when his family moved to Auckland, NZ. On returning to Sydney after High School, Tony worked for various companies and organizations and then became an Auslan instructor at North Sydney TAFE. Tony has been involved in many and various sports clubs and in 2005 moved to Melbourne to take up the job of Sports Liaison Officer at the Deaflympics. Tony currently lives in Sydney with his wife and children and works at the Deaf Society of NSW as a Community Development Officer.

**Sharon Everson** was born and educated in Grafton, NSW. After working briefly at a car dealership there she decided to move to Sydney in 1977 in order to expand her career opportunities. The first job she obtained in Sydney was as Junior Secretary at the Deaf Society of NSW. Sharon began an involvement with the wider Deaf Community through volunteering as literacy teacher for the Adult Education Program and Youth Group. In

1986 Sharon was appointed Administration Manager of the Deaf Society and in 1999 Sharon became an Executive Director of the organisation. In 2009 Sharon became C.E.O of the Society. Sharon has a Graduate Certificate in International and Community Development as well as various diplomas and certificates in Governance. Sharon also has two children and excepting the period of time around their births, she has worked continuously at the Deaf Society for 36 years.

**John Ferris** was born in Sydney and became a trainee welfare officer at the then Adult Deaf and Dumb Society in 1953. When John got married in 1954 he and his wife Elaine, became residents of the Deaf Society's headquarters in Elizabeth Street. John later took charge of the Society's Northern Branch, working for ten years in Newcastle, after which he returned to Sydney as the Deaf Society's Senior Welfare Officer. In 1973 John was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study trends in welfare services for adult deaf people abroad. Upon his return to the Deaf Society of NSW he implemented a number of programs including the Adult Education Program, Playgroup for CODAs, Sign Language classes for hearing people and the Mattara deaf men's service club. John was a founding member of the National Australian Association of Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) and was one of their first Sign Language accreditors. John also conducted Church of the Deaf and for a time was editor of the Silent Messenger periodical. After 37 years of continuous employment at the Deaf Society, his last two in the role of Executive Officer, John retired and now lives with Elaine in a retirement village in Sydney.

**Rebecca Ladd** was born and educated in Sydney's North Shore and had her first contact with deaf culture and language when she saw an Australian Theatre of the Deaf performance at her high-school. In 1986 she began work at the Deaf Society as a Social Educator. By 1990 Rebecca Ladd had become the manager of the Community Education, Training and Liaison department of the Society and in 1999 became Executive Director, Client and Community Services. Rebecca became an Auslan Interpreter at the highest accredited level and worked in various capacities for the Association of Sign Language Interpreters. Rebecca also was a Director of Deafness Resources and a member of the NSW Association of the Deaf. Rebecca left employment at the Deaf Society in 2009 to work for Deaf Children Australia and later, Community Care (Northern Beaches). She lives with her husband whom she met whilst they both worked for the Deaf Society.

**Shirley Liu** was born profoundly deaf is the only deaf person in her family which now encompasses three cultures: Australian, Chinese and Deaf. Shirley went to Thomas Pattison School, North Rocks until year 10 when she mainstreamed into the Hills Grammar School to complete her HSC. Shirley is now doing a Bachelor of Design (Visual Communication), specializing in graphic design and photography. Shirley has worked for the Deaf Society of NSW as a Support Teacher for General Education for Deaf Adults as well as a Sign Language teacher in community courses and for RIDBC Thomas Pattison School as a casual teachers aide. She is a youth leader at events run by the DSNSW and the Ephepheta Centre and was an Australian representative to the World Federation of the Deaf Youth Section Junior Camp in Rome. Shirley contributes to the Deaf Community through volunteering, leadership and involvement in sporting events and plays netball for Deaf Netball NSW.

**Trevor Maggs** was born in Adelaide, South Australia into a deaf family which boasts five generations of deaf Australians. Trevor was home schooled by his mother who refused to send him to an Oral School until he was 6 years old. Trevor's schooling was made up of Oralism and Total Education and he left school without completing a HSC, moving to Sydney in 1986 in pursuit of a better education. Trevor was able to compete a Diploma in Electrical Engineering at TAFE NSW in 1991 with the NSW government

providing Sign Language interpreters. Trevor won North Sydney TAFE Student of the Year in 1990 a Rotary Pride of Workmanship award in 1991. Trevor went on a working holiday in Europe and North America for two years and came back to complete a Bachelor of Computer Science at Macquarie University in 2000. Trevor now works in I.T. at IMB and has a family.

**Adam Salzer** graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Arts in the 1970s and soon after became the director of the NSW Theatre of the Deaf which later became the Australian Theatre of the Deaf. Adam's relationship with the Deaf Community then progressed to his involvement in the management of the Deaf Society of NSW where he was to become a Director and later Chairman of the Board. Adam's primary education as an economist was used to serve the Deaf Society in its time of implementing a Corporate Plan and moving to Parramatta. Adam also served as Director and Chairman for the Australian Deafness Council and in partnership with his wife, Alexandra Hynes, established the Australian Caption Centre in 1982. In 1988 Adam was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for Services to the Deaf Community. Adam went on to work in international investment banking, corporate advisory services and telecommunications. He now lives and works in Hong Kong as Managing Director of PricewaterhouseCoopers, Asia Region.