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NEW AUSLAN STORYTIME PROGRAM FOR DEAF CHILDREN

The City of Ryde is set to play an important role in the support of Deaf and hard-of-hearing (HoH) children with the establishment of an Auslan Story Time program at North Ryde Library.

Working in collaboration with Deaf Connect, the largest service provider for Deaf, Deafblind and HoH Australians, Council will begin a 12-month trial of the program at North Ryde Library, located at 201 Coxs Road, in July 2023.

This followed a Council resolution from 22 November 2022 that resolved that staff collaborate with Deaf Connect to establish an Auslan Story Time program.

The Story Time sessions will be facilitated by a Deaf storyteller proficient in Auslan, with an Auslan interpreter who reads a story out loud in English with the support of a City of Ryde librarian.

Deaf Connect will train and work collaboratively with City of Ryde Libraries in selecting books suitable for the sessions from the library's collection.

There are 16,242 Deaf, Deafblind, HoH people, as well as non-verbal children and adults, in Australia who use Auslan as their primary form of communication.

In Australia, one in 1,000 two-year-olds are diagnosed as having hearing loss. It's estimated at least 3,500 local children, their families, professionals, and support services could benefit either directly or indirectly from the Auslan Story Time program.

City of Ryde Mayor Cllr Sarkis Yedelian OAM said the Story Time program will provide great benefit, with significant evidence that Auslan competency improves cognitive development and increases school and tertiary education completion rates among the Deaf community as well as improving rates of employment.

"This trial program is an excellent fit with the guiding principles of City of Ryde Libraries where we provide inclusive and welcoming spaces that inspire social, recreational, creative, and learning experiences for our diverse community," he said.

The mover of the Council initiative, Cllr Roy Maggio, is delighted that Council will be trialling this important social initiative.

"I encourage families to participate in this excellent program, which is close to my heart, further enhancing inclusiveness in our community," he said.

"I am certain the trial will prove to be very impactful and successful, and I hope that in due course this program will turn into a permanent fixture within our libraries. I am proud that Council is taking meaningful action to support this wonderful community. It's imperative to be inclusive in our City."

Deaf Connect's General Manager of Information Services Andrew Wiltshire said his organisation was proud to partner with the City of Ryde to promote bilingual literacy and increase exposure to Auslan through the new Auslan Story Time program.

"We are so excited to bring Auslan Story Time to the North Ryde Library," he said. "Auslan Story Time is designed for children who sign, are learning to sign, or enjoy having stories told to them in Auslan. It's a program designed to provide access to all children and provide an authentic representation of the language of the Australian Deaf Community."

It is expected that a significant number of the 200 children that will attend a new Centre of Excellence being developed at Macquarie University by the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (now NextSense) will participate in the Story Time sessions, as well as other children living within, and surrounding, the Ryde local government area.

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