

Declan meets the Opposition Leader!

We are so proud of Declan Lee that we would like to share his story with you. Declan who is in Year 11 and joined our program this year, recently met with Australia's Opposition Leader Mr Tony Abbott and we thought it would be fitting to share his story with you - especially being in the midst of the 2010 Elections.

As self-advocacy was one of the topics in our "Leadership Enrichment" workshop, Declan says he felt inspired by the 2010 Hear For You program to advocate for himself and fellow deaf people at the meeting regarding captioning in cinemas. He shares the following story.

Declan's Story

"I attended a community meet-the-member night at Mosman RSL club. Tony Abbott is the Federal Member for my area and was picking people who wanted to ask questions about the Liberal Government. As Tony Abbott picked me to ask a question, I was really nervous and wondered how I was going to be able to handle a situation like this. Was I to become a laughing stock or would people listen to me with interest? At that moment it didn't matter because I knew my mentors David Brady, Kate Obermayer and Olivia Andersen were counting on me to speak up on behalf of not only myself but the entire hearing impaired community.

I gave it my best shot! **I spoke about the unfair discrimination of captioned movies in cinemas – as there are only 100 captioned movies a week in Australia.** I also mentioned that Hoyts, Greater Union and Village cinemas are avoiding placing captions in their cinemas for the next 2 years. I also talked about the advantages of the new Captioned Telephone that I received from the Australian Communications Exchange. Mr Abbott was interested in what I had to say. **After the meeting many people congratulated me on my courage to speak up to a nation's leader. I felt exhilarated and very proud.**

I don't think I could have done it without being a mentee at Hear For You. I really benefited from the activities on self-advocacy and leadership especially with the intense amount of advice David and Kate gave me.



I also really enjoyed learning about other people in my group, what stories they had to tell, what difficulties they previously experienced and how they had overcome difficult situations. I really think that I got along well with some of the people in my group. Apart from the mentors I made some new friends as well which was really great. I am really pleased to have been a part of this exhilarating learning experience!"

Declan seated next to Stephanie at the Hear For You workshop.

Declan Lee, Year 11