

International Week of Deaf People.





The rich diversity of sign languages.

Many people assume that there is only one sign language, and express disbelief when told otherwise. Why?

Wouldn't it be more sensible if there was just one signed language? Then Deaf people could communicate with each other? (note that 'Deaf' with a capital 'D' is used to refer to a person with lived experience who identifies as being culturally deaf and a member of the Deaf community.)

Undoubtedly, this is true, but could the same not be said for spoken languages?

So why is there such a rich diversity in sign languages? The answer is, for the same reason that there is in spoken languages.

Sign languages emerge from a community of people with a need to communicate with each other. As different sign languages were born, there was very little contact between the communities who used each language. How and why would Deaf people in Australia and in Ghana be in contact for a common sign language to evolve?

For this reason, sign languages, just like spoken languages, are parts of different families which describes the relative distance between languages. And the families are not what you would expect.

People are often surprised that Auslan and American Sign Language (ASL) have very little in common, not even having the same alphabet. This is because while Auslan belongs to the BANZSL family (British, Australian and New Zealand Sign Language), ASL belongs to the Francosign family which originates from Old French Sign Language.

There is also an international sign language, used by Deaf people to facilitate cross-linguistic communication in settings such as in international conferences and meetings.

However, it is not a natural or complete signed language, like Auslan. It is considered a pidgin form of sign language as it has been created, lacks the complexity of [natural sign languages](#), and has a limited lexicon.

It is especially important to recognise the importance of Indigenous sign languages.

In Australia, there are multiple Indigenous sign languages that have been preserved, revitalised, and/or created. These include Takataka (Gurindji Sign Language) and Yolŋu (Yolngu) Sign Language. More information on Indigenous Sign Languages can be found [here](#).

Adjunct Associate Research Professor [Kate Crowe](#) (pictured), writing for [From Charles Sturt University News](#).



The global Deaf community celebrates the International Week of Deaf People during the last full week of September, culminating with the International Day of the Deaf on the final Sunday.

It's a time when Deaf communities worldwide engage in activities that draw participation from a broad spectrum of supporters, including families, professionals, governmental bodies, and sign language interpreters, to foster understanding and celebrate the rich culture of the Deaf.

Ambulance Sign Language App will Help Save Lives

An ambulance service is using a video app to improve its care for people with a hearing impairment.

England's North East Ambulance Service vehicles have an iPad equipped with an app that allows patients and crews to interact with a British Sign Language interpreter on screen.

Rachel Austin, co-ordinator at Hartlepool Deaf Centre, said the service would "help to save more lives".

Ambulance crews will be able to use the app 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year to help assess the patient's condition and explain the next steps of their treatment. It can also be used non-emergency situations, such as for community engagement teams providing advice and training.

From [BBC North East](#)





A Commonwealth Government announcement.

Increased Auslan funding through JobAccess opens opportunities for Sofya’s career in film and theatre.

Sofya enjoys her varied role in film and theatre, working with talented individuals. As a Deaf person, Sofya experienced communication barriers at work. That’s when she and her employer contacted JobAccess for Auslan funding support. This has helped improve communication, and enhance inclusion and access for Sofya at work.

Sofya Gollan is a screenwriter, director and actor. She also works with a writers room and on set in production.

Sofya is Deaf and uses Auslan (Australian Sign Language) as one of her main forms of communication. The project she was working on did not have Auslan interpreters, which made communication a challenge for her. Sofya also works with large teams, which makes communicating more complex.

That’s when Sofya and her employer, Spit Films Pty Ltd, contacted JobAccess for help. They applied for Auslan interpreter funding via the [Employment Assistance Fund \(EAF\)](#). The EAF gives financial help to employers and people with disability to make work-related modifications or adjustments.

In 2023, the Australian Government [increased funding for Auslan interpreting services](#). The goal was to help Deaf employees communicate and collaborate better at work. The yearly funding for Auslan Level 1 interpreting doubled from \$6,000 to \$12,000, with indexation added yearly.

“The increase for Auslan interpreting has been a welcome change. Earlier, the funding would run out quickly,” Sofya said.

Sofya and her employer lodged an EAF application through the JobAccess website for Auslan interpreting. Soon after lodging the application, a JobAccess Professional Adviser contacted Sofya and her employer. They discussed eligibility requirements and some of the barriers she experienced at work. Sofya found the application process easy and liked that it was employer-led. The funding was granted very quickly.

“Having the support for interpreting is so welcome and much needed. It ensures a respectful and smooth working process.”

“Having an interpreter means that fear or anxiety no longer exists. It also means I have more opportunity to network. This helps me build strong industry connections.”

JobAccess is the go-to expert for disability employment matters. It helps remove barriers to sustainable employment for people with disability. JobAccess has a team of allied health professionals who provide expert, confidential and tailored advice on workplace adjustments from the first point of contact.

For expert advice and tailored support, [submit an online enquiry](#) or [visit the website](#).
<http://www.jobaccess.gov.au/>

Advocacy in Action

Deafness Forum wishes to acknowledge the advocacy of former Deaf Australia CEO Karen Lloyd AM.

Karen tirelessly championed an increase in the EAF Auslan allowance. Her patient and persistent efforts have paid off.



Ensuring Access: Addressing the Auslan Workforce Shortage.

In 2022, a certified interpreter was relocated to the Northern Territory through a joint effort between Deaf Connect and the Northern Territory Government. Prior to their arrival, the state had been without a full-time interpreter since 2019.

While the Northern Territory's experience of relying on fly-in fly-out interpreters is an extreme case, it is not unique, particularly for regional communities.

Despite consistent advocacy and support from state governments, the fundamental issue that Deaf Australians have historically faced has continued to this day: a critical shortage of qualified interpreters.

The rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme unlocked new opportunities for Auslan interpreters, necessitating their role in many more social and day-to-day situations. However, supply has failed to meet demand, and the workforce is struggling to keep up.

Addressing this shortage is complex, with challenges including the lack of a coordinated national strategy and inconsistent state-level efforts to incentivise interpreter training. Without a unified approach, the sector will struggle to grow the workforce necessary to meet rising demand now and into the future.

From Certificate to Certification – a Complex Journey

Education pathways for would-be interpreters are more comprehensive than ever before and are branching to better suit a range of careers in the Auslan workforce, including Deaf interpreting and Auslan translation.

And the student interest is there.

In recent years, the visibility of Auslan interpreters, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has contributed to a surge of interest in learning the language. As interpreters became fixtures on screens, conveying important updates from State Premiers, Auslan was brought into the national spotlight. This increased visibility has driven more people, including those without direct ties to the Deaf community, to pursue careers in interpreting.

During the pandemic, Deaf Connect enrolments in Auslan courses surged to record numbers, reflecting the growing prominence of sign language in Australian media. In recent years, Deaf Connect and other providers have sought to meet this demand by offering qualifications from Certificate II in Auslan through to the Diploma of Interpreting. More than 4,500 students complete non-accredited beginner Auslan courses.

These students aren't all destined to become certified interpreters: many are looking for employment in a related field, or studying for personal reasons such as communication with a Deaf family member or colleague. For those looking to acquire a certification, the process typically takes over six years, with even more time needed for higher-level certifications. While interest in Auslan is at an all-time high, the challenge now lies in finding enough qualified teachers to meet the growing demand.

Authentic Learning: the Importance of Deaf Teachers

Auslan, with its rich cultural history, is not just a language but a vital part of Deaf identity. It is essential that Auslan is taught by members of the Deaf community, who bring not only linguistic skills but also a deep understanding of Deaf culture, history, and values. This ensures that the language is delivered in a culturally affirming manner.

Filling these teaching positions takes time and requires a qualified workforce and further investment in the creation of more job opportunities.

A coordinated national effort to incentivise such roles could significantly increase the number of Auslan teachers, allowing more students to participate and ultimately producing a greater number of interpreters.

We recognise and appreciate the efforts of governments at all levels to invest in the future Auslan workforce. However, to meet growing demand and enhance the quality of education, a more coordinated approach is necessary to

increase investment in Auslan training and teacher development.

Encouraging future interpreters with free courses taught by qualified Deaf community members is an essential step in increasing enrolment and participation. This ensures the language is taught in a way that is both linguistically accurate and deeply rooted in Deaf cultural and social contexts.

The New Normal: Training and the Role of the NDIS

As we strive to train the future Auslan and interpreting workforce, it's essential to acknowledge the shifting landscape shaped by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS has not only highlighted the existing demand for Auslan interpreters but has also intensified the challenges surrounding access to services.

While the need for interpreters has steadily increased over time, the number of certified interpreters has not kept pace, exacerbating the shortage.

Australia's largest Auslan interpreting agencies mandate that interpreters must hold current NAATI certification to be eligible to work with clients funded through the NDIS. This requirement is in place to ensure that agencies can guarantee NDIS participants receive high-quality interpreting services that meet professional standards. It also guarantees that both Deaf and hearing individuals can trust the communication process and have assurance that their conversations are being accurately and reliably conveyed.

The NDIS was introduced at a time when there was already a shortage of Auslan interpreters. To this day, there is still no national strategy to address the shortage associated with the scheme, even though the training required for NAATI certification takes significantly longer compared to the training for other disability support roles.

As industry leader and Deaf community advocate, the late Leonie Jackson stated, "this extended timeframe for training contrasts with other disability supports, where adaptive

communication techniques can be learned more rapidly. The interpreter shortage is already affecting the timeliness of services. When interpreters are unavailable, appointments may be postponed, and crucial opportunities missed.”

Auslan interpreters are often needed in high-stakes settings, such as medical appointments, legal proceedings, and educational environments, where precise communication can be life-changing. Addressing this shortage requires sustained investment in training and support to build a workforce capable of meeting the Deaf community's unique needs.

Looking Ahead: The Need for a Unified Federal Approach

The response to the Auslan interpreter workforce shortage has varied significantly across Australian states. Here, we delve into some of the State Government approaches that have attempted to combat this issue.

- Victoria has introduced the Free TAFE program, which covers tuition fees for Auslan interpreting courses, including the Diploma of Auslan and related qualifications. This initiative aims to make training more accessible and reduce barriers to entry, benefiting many students and saving substantial amounts in tuition costs.
- The Northern Territory is investing nearly \$450,000 over three years in the Auslan Interpreter and Scholarship Program. This aims to fast-track interpreter training and includes financial support and partnerships with key organisations to address needs in various sectors, including government services and emergency communications.
- Building our Auslan workforce can start in the school system. New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia are incorporating Auslan into the school curriculum, providing students with the opportunity to learn Auslan from an early age. While increasing general knowledge of the language is great, there is no

requirement for teachers to be fluent in Auslan, or for them to be Deaf community members. As a result, students are not being taught the language in a culturally appropriate way that pays tribute to the heritage, identity and culture of the Deaf community.

Outside of any impacts on Deaf students, this may also have an adverse effect on their interest in the language and may not set students up for success, if they wished to pursue accredited courses outside of school.

- The Australian Capital Territory has assessed the need for Auslan accessibility in a nation-first Auslan Inquiry. However, the ACT Government's response to the recommendations made by the inquiry was somewhat limited, avoiding commitment to the establishment of specific targets or expansion of training opportunities.

Deaf organisations such as DeafACT have called out the ACT Government for their acceptance of just 1 out of the 25 recommendations made by the inquiry.

A Comprehensive National Strategy

As we tackle this pressing issue, it's clear that a coordinated national effort is needed to address the shortage and prioritise training and support for Deaf educators.

Investing in Auslan education is more than just filling roles: it's about ensuring that every Australian has what they need to access equal opportunities and participate in society.

The establishment of consistent qualification standards and training pathways for interpreters across all states, along with coordinated national investment, could ensure that training and certification are accessible and affordable in the future. This approach would provide the coordination needed to increase interpreter supply across the country.

The shortage of Auslan interpreters isn't just a statistic; it's a real barrier to equal participation in society faced by many Deaf community members.

Reflecting on the recent arrival of the first full-time certified interpreter in the Northern Territory, it's important to remember how crucial these professionals are, especially in regions that have been left behind for far too long.

The time for action is now. Together, we can build a framework that not only meets the needs of communities but also ensures that Auslan interpreters are ready and waiting to facilitate essential conversations everywhere.

For an Auslan overview of this article, scan here



Article by Deaf Connect Chief Services Officer, Brent Phillips.



More films and series in sign language have now been released since 2010 than in the century of film history before it.

There have never been more Deaf and signing actors, directors and writers working in the film industry. But there are still films being made with hearing actors in deaf roles, without any Deaf representation in the production team, or that perpetuate damaging myths about deafness and sign language.

Dr Gemma King, Senior Lecturer in French at the ANU School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics is researching how contemporary screens represent deafness and how sign language cinemas filter non-ableist perspectives.

Supported by the Australia Research Council's Discovery Early Career Research Award, Dr King is partnering with Deaf Connect and the National Film and Sound Archive on **Sign on Screen: Language, Culture and Power in Sign Language Cinemas**.

Sign on Screen is the first large-scale research project that studies, promotes and critiques global sign language cinemas. The website has just launched at signonscreen.com, and includes information about the research, partners and events, and especially the film finder – the first catalogue of all feature films, shorts, series and documentaries that have been made in all the sign languages of the world.

Visit the Sign on Screen [website](http://signonscreen.com) to find your next favourite movie, or maybe even your next project, be it in research, industry or community work. The data is there to be accessed and used for free.



National Deafness Sector Summit 2024

PROTECT HEARING, SECURE FUTURES

PRESENTED BY
DEAFNESS FORUM AUSTRALIA.

JOIN US TO LEARN, SHARE INSIGHTS, BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS, AND COLLABORATE ON ACTIONS TO ADDRESS PREVENTABLE HEARING LOSS.

Agenda

MORNING SESSION: MAKE LISTENING SAFE - A CALL TO ACTION

THE HEARING OF OVER ONE BILLION YOUNG PEOPLE WORLDWIDE IS AT RISK FROM UNSAFE LISTENING PRACTICES. THE AUSTRALIAN LAUNCH OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION'S MAKE LISTENING SAFE INITIATIVE WILL DRIVE ACTIONABLE CHANGE.

AFTERNOON SESSION: SAFEGUARDING BABIES, CHILDREN, AND YOUNG PEOPLE

EVERY YEAR, 400 AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN ARE BORN WITH HEARING DISABILITIES DUE TO CYTOMEGALOVIRUS (CMV). WE AIM TO RAISE AWARENESS AND IMPLEMENT PREVENTION STRATEGIES TO PROTECT OUR YOUNGEST.



Details

DATE: FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2024
LOCATION: CRUISING YACHT CLUB,
RUSHCUTTERS BAY, SYDNEY
TIME: 10.00 AM TO 3.00 PM

Join us to make a difference.



[RSVP here](#)

Inquiries to [Hello@DeafnessForum.org.au](mailto>Hello@DeafnessForum.org.au)

Deaf Tasmanians disadvantaged by lack of live captioning in parliament



From [Pulse Tasmania](#). Image / Pulse

The Tasmanian Parliament is facing calls to improve its accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Currently, parliamentary proceedings are only streamed through a “webcast” that lacks live captioning and, unlike platforms like YouTube, the ability to rewind instantly.

This forces individuals with hearing challenges to wait several hours for the Hansard transcript to become available, making it difficult for them to follow debates and discussions in real-time.

Labor Leader Dean Winter believes the parliament should follow the lead of other jurisdictions like New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, which have taken steps to enhance accessibility for the deaf community.

“Parliaments are home to some of the most significant debates and speeches in our society and we should be doing everything we can to ensure that everyone in our community can participate in equal use in our democracy.”



Labor leader Dean Winter. Image / Pulse

“I’d really like to see the parliamentary broadcast to include closed captions as part of our daily broadcast of Parliamentary proceedings.”

Greens leader Rosalie Woodruff also voiced her support for the improvements, acknowledging the challenges faced by deaf people in a world that is ableist.

“While Members of this parliament don’t have the lived experience of not hearing, we all have the capacity to listen and learn and act,” she said.



Queensland Museum is custodian of the state’s natural and cultural heritage, caring for more than a million items and specimens in collections that tell the changing story of Queensland.

Deaf and hard of hearing community members are part of this story.

Visitors can join the museum’s free, Highlights Tours and Auslan Interpreted Highlights Tours at Queensland Museum Kurilpa in Brisbane. Assistive listening devices are available.

Auslan interpreted tours also run for the museum’s latest, free exhibition *Say Our Name: Australian South Sea Islanders*, free Discovery Centre displays, ticketed sessions of *SparkLab* STEM space and the *Discovering Ancient Egypt* exhibition opening this October.

Queensland Museum Kurilpa’s neighbours, the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, State Library of Queensland and Queensland Performing Arts Centre also run Auslan interpreted events.

- <https://www.museum.qld.gov.au/kurilpa/whats-on/auslan-interpreted-events-summary>
- <https://www.museum.qld.gov.au/kurilpa/whats-on/auslan-interpreted-highlights-tour>

Professional Competencies in Deafblind Communication

The findings from a global survey of interpreters, support workers and other professionals who provide support services to deafblind people are available in a report.

The reports finds that professionals show a strong appetite for professional development in deafblind communication.

But while most expressed strong desire to keep working in the sector, poor remuneration or lack of steady hours were central reasons people named for why they were considering leaving the profession and are undoubtedly contributing to workforce shortages in the sector.

Read [Deafblind Professionals Report](#)



In-Person Seminar Event

audiology for life

11th October 2024

Melbourne



Join **Independent Audiologists Australia** for
Audiology for Life!

Audiology for Life! is a celebration of person-centred care in our profession, and aims to reconnect delegates with their 'why' for practising Audiology.

As audiologists we assist people to live their lives to the fullest; we are also lifelong health professionals who thrive in an environment where we can continue to grow and develop, and practise at the top of our scope throughout our working lives. Let's get back to doing what we trained for, and doing it well!

[View Program](#)

Scan the QR code to register today or click [HERE](#)



All Welcome

<https://independentaudiologists.net.au/event-5813117>

Keynote Speaker

We're delighted to share that our keynote speaker will be multi-award winning health journalist, commentator and broadcaster, [Dr Norman Swan](#).



Dr Norman Swan

Joining Dr Swan will be Professor Melinda Edwards - Ethics Advisory Service, Dr Dunay Schmulian - Cotton Tree Audiology and Dr Emma Laird - University of Melbourne among others.



CPD ENDORSED

Audiology Australia: CPD2425 025
6.25 CPD points category 1.1

ACAud inc. HAASA: CEP approval code
2024138 - up to 12 points including post-
event workshops.



Systems that support hearing families with deaf children.

More than 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents who have limited knowledge about deafness and require comprehensive support and information to support and communicate with their deaf child. However, little is known about the systems that support hearing families with deaf children.

When parents find out their child has been diagnosed as deaf or having hearing loss, or when they suspect this to be the case, families begin a journey that involves differing amounts of support, information, and guidance. For many families, initial discussions begin at new-born hearing screening, if these services are available. Newborn hearing screening has become an essential part of neonatal care in high-income countries with positive outcomes following early intervention during the critical period to enable optimal language development. The early detection of hearing status can prevent significant detrimental effects on cognitive development happening later. For example, if children's development needs are not fully

addressed a deaf child may not develop language skills to ensure fluent communication as a vital platform for further learning. Language deprivation in the first five years of life appears to have permanent consequences for long-term neurological development.

Whilst families welcome prompt hearing screening, it is worth bearing in mind the range of perspectives that exist about deafness. Parents say they encounter predominantly medical model approaches, which suggest their child has a deficit, proposing that deafness is treated and seen as an impairment. Hearing families may find later that there are cultural-linguistic models and alternative approaches that help them understand the social identity of their deaf children. The socio-cultural view that considers the rich environment of Deaf communities, including the naturalness of sign languages with deafness seen as a way of being, and not an impairment. Diagnostic rituals can set in motion a deficit-orientated way of addressing a child's needs, sometimes resulting in diminishing parental competence and confidence. Often parents report that initial information received upon early detection of their child's hearing loss can be incomplete and coloured by workers' personal beliefs and values, usually originating from a medical model, when healthcare policies could acknowledge the broad scope of conflicting views that hearing parents may encounter.

Hearing screening, identification and individualised early intervention is critical in helping deaf or hard of hearing children achieve their full potential and has led many nations to develop Early Hearing Detection and Intervention

programs. It may be audiology, speech and language services or education professionals who begin to provide parents with advice about communication choices and pathways. Frequently the not-for-profit or charity sector agencies provide additional support and information perhaps because they have wider scope in terms of delivery arrangements.

Systems that support hearing parents with deaf children may include education, health, care, and social services, depending on the child's age and location. Support may be provided by statutory services and the voluntary sector and may include short-term initiatives and long-term input. Essentially the support families have and the advice they are given in the early years of their child's life is of key importance. Hearing parents will want to know about how the ear works, about deafness, communication and language choices, their child's emotional and social development, education, alerting and assistive devices as well as early years support. At an early point there will be discussions with the family about the child's language development and communication options. Professionals who support families with deaf children may hold a range of views towards sign language, but essentially families will decide about communication choices and whether their child will learn a mixture of spoken and signed language or just a spoken language. Decisions made about communication choice will likely affect the child and family for a lifetime.

Fully accessible language experiences during the early years are vital in empowering deaf children's development potential. There is a critical window for language development and if a child is not fluent in a language by around the age of five years old, he or she may not achieve full fluency in any language. It is a foundational language that is key to the development of future language. Sign language often comes naturally to deaf children, and deaf children exposed to sign language during the first 6 months of life have age-expected vocabulary growth when compared to hearing children, meaning that learning a signed language can avoid language delays.

If parents are keen for their deaf child to learn speech, then sign language does not impede this. Parents can be given misinformation and not be made aware that there are risks in excluding sign language during the critical time of language acquisition, with no evidence that sign language causes harm. There are recommendations for changes in existing systems to support bimodal bilingualism as default practice, in order to provide the best educational outcomes, which means a signed language and a spoken language. It is suggested that all deaf children should be bilingual. However, little is known about the support parents are given at the outset of these decision-making processes.

Critics suggest there is a need to stop dichotomising spoken or signed language, and to focus instead on educating families about the range of opportunities available. Frequently hearing parents of deaf children do not know where to turn for support and can be overwhelmed with advice as they try to understand different methods employed in the language development and education of their child. Support for hearing parents of deaf children varies globally. A variety of initiatives and projects appear regularly in local and regional news stories, such as support for sign language classes, family camps for deaf children and artificial intelligence avatars that help deaf children to read. Support systems are people or structures in society that provide information, resources, encouragement, practical assistance, and emotional strength.

There is limited published evidence about the support systems for hearing parents with deaf children. Therefore, we conducted a scoping review to provide a baseline overview of the published evidence until 2021 of the extent, variety, and nature of literature in this area.

Read about the [Findings of this research](#)

By Julia Terry, Jaynie Rance

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0288771>

From [Systems that support hearing families with deaf children: A scoping review | PLOS ONE](#)



Lisa navigates the world with Deafblindness



Hearing Services Program: Insights and Discussion

Join us for the launch of our new discussion paper on the Hearing Services Program.

We'll explore the current state of the program, reflect on past reviews, and discuss potential future directions.

This is a great chance to connect with key stakeholders, share your thoughts, and help enhance hearing health services.

Whether you work in the field or have a personal interest, your input will help shape the future of hearing services in Australia.

Be part of this important conversation and help drive progress in hearing health.

Event Details:

Monday, 30 September

1pm – 2 pm (AEST) online

Captions & AUSLAN interpreter will be provided.

Register [here](#).

Lisa volunteers at a support group for Deafblind people which advocates for their rights. She encourages Deafblind people to get involved in the community to help reduce social isolation.

Lisa was born deaf with CHARGE syndrome and Pierre Robin syndrome. She became blind at the age of 21 due to retinal detachment. Learning to communicate with others as a Deafblind person was a challenge.

Learn about the accommodations Lisa has made at home, how she communicates with her Indonesian parents, and her work sharing her experiences and stories as a public speaker.

Learn about Lisa in this episode of Humans of the Australian Deaf Community, and find other episodes in the series on the SBS Australia [YouTube](#) channel.



UsherKids Australia invites you to experience the tropical beauty of Magnetic Island, just off the coast of Townsville, Queensland.

This stunning island, steeped in history, will host the USHthis Aussie Camp, where teens (12-17) and young adults (18-26) will connect, engage in empowering activities, and learn strategies to overcome challenges.

Meanwhile, families can enjoy a nearby breakaway weekend, offering support and a chance to share experiences. It's a weekend filled with growth, connection, and adventure in a beautiful setting!

Register your interest [here](#).

Open captioning in cinemas survey

Deaf Victoria has developed a survey to understand people's views about open captioning in cinemas. [Auslan video](#)

[Please click here and complete the survey.](#)

It is easy to complete, and no typing is needed. This is for both hearing and deaf people.



A message from Hayley about changes to the NDIS.

To everyone who is a NDIS participant, a family member, a carer or ally, I urge you to keep yourself informed of changes being made to the Scheme after 3 October 2024.

- You can regularly visit the [NDIS website](#)
- You can also subscribe to the [NDIS Newsletter](#)
- To get emails about how you can give feedback on the changes, you can [join Participant First](#)

Hayley Stone is Deafness Forum Australia's Director of National Policy & Advocacy. Feel free to reach out to Hayley by [email](#).



Reminder to our Member Organisations

It is that time of year when we call for nominations for directors on the Board of Deafness Forum Australia.

[Contact us](#) for more information.

Improving Australia's Disability Strategy



Deafness Forum Australia was invited to contribute to improving Australia's Disability Strategy by providing feedback to a national review conducted in August and September.

Australia's Disability Strategy plays a crucial role in driving systemic improvements and cultural changes to create a more equitable and accessible society for all Australians.

How to engage all sectors of society in implementing Australia's Disability Strategy?

The existing Strategy states: Australian, state, territory, and local governments, along with businesses, the community, and the non-government sector all play a role in supporting people with disability to enjoy their human rights on an equal basis with others. But currently, only Governments are required to be directly accountable to Australia's Disability Strategy. The practical implication is that there is no assured consistency of rights for people with hearing loss in the community: a person may have access to a hearing loop at the train station but may not have access to equivalent support at the local shopping mall or theatre.

The Disability Discrimination Act is now 30 years old, and we've had two iterations of the Strategy. While there has been positive change across many aspects of public service delivery, there has been limited engagement with the Strategy in a voluntary capacity across the private sector.

The Australian Human Rights Commission has stated: Although a considerable amount of focus in the community has been given to highlighting what are discriminatory practices towards people with disability, less focus has been given by organisations, businesses and providers of goods and services as to how to promote equal opportunities for people with disability. This has meant the inclusion of people with disability has suffered.

Currently, the Strategy is constrained by both its design and implementation. Until we have a government that is prepared to expand accountability, people with disability will continue to be marginalised and subject to violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

We strongly advocate for the Federal Government to expand the mandatory requirement for Disability Action Plans across all businesses and providers of goods and services as part of its review of the Strategy and would be open to a staged approach being taken.

Being accountable under the Strategy – having a Disability Action Plan – sends an important message to the community that businesses and providers of goods and services consider people with disability as being equal. While we consider that expanding responsibility for disability inclusion to the private sector is already well overdue, we would support a staged approach to such a process, in principle.

How can Australia's Disability Strategy more effectively address all forms of equality and build a human rights approach based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability?

By its very nature, the Strategy lacks the power to enforce compliance.

We have concluded that we need greater positive legislative accountability for disability inclusion across all levels of society.

Australia's Disability Strategy cannot and should not be the primary tool for fulfilling Australia's commitments under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is also unacceptable to expect people with disability to bear the onus of enforcing their rights. We need a better solution, with the capacity to achieve broadscale societal change in line with the expectations of the Strategy.



Australia's Disability Strategy should sit beneath a new Federal Human Rights Act, to provide a practical framework for applying the legislative rights of people with disability in Australian society.

Australia is currently the only liberal democracy in the world that does not have a national act or charter of rights explaining people's basic rights and how they can be protected. A Federal Human Rights Act has been endorsed by the Australian Human Rights Commission. More information on a national Human Rights Act can be [found here](#).

How should the Strategy take action towards achieving inclusive education?

It will be vitally important to work in codesign to understand what inclusive education is, and how it could practically be achieved in the context of the public education system.

Children with disability should be assured of a smooth transition through different levels of education and guaranteed an inclusive educational experience across all stages of their educational journey.

It is essential to create space for a thorough discussion on whether fully inclusive education – where all children with disability attend mainstream schools – is genuinely fair and equitable for everyone.

Choice is crucial

There needs to be an acknowledgment that choice is important – families deserve the opportunity to choose what works best for them and most importantly, their child – and while they should be guaranteed an inclusive educational experience in the mainstream schooling system, the option to choose a specialised school should not be compromised or devalued as a legitimate choice for that family.

Many people in our constituency, whose primary or only language is Australian Sign Language, are concerned about the idea of moving away from special schools, as an option for families of children who communicate primarily via Auslan. They fear that the unique Deaf education ecosystems, carefully cultivated in specialist schools for Deaf children, could be dismantled, forcing their children into mainstream settings without the necessary support to succeed. This issue calls for a genuinely inclusive codesign process with those most directly impacted.

Information is empowerment.

Accessible information and communications play a critical role in ensuring the safety, independence, and inclusion of people with disability.

Should there be a focus on identifying and supporting best practice approaches for accessible communications?



When information is provided in various formats, it empowers people with disability and people from non-English speaking backgrounds to make informed decisions about the services and supports that best meet their needs.

Under Australia's Disability Strategy, there are no clear, enforceable requirements for promoting accessible information and communications beyond the Guiding Principles.

Deafness Forum Australia, on behalf of its constituency and many other advocates, has raised this cause of significant concern, and it urgently needs to be addressed.

How should Australia's Disability Strategy take action towards increasing leadership by people with disability?

People with disability should have equal opportunity to access the education and training

they need to be qualified to apply for positions of leadership, and barriers need to be eliminated to allow them to compete for these roles on an equal basis with other candidates.

The Government needs to incentivise employers to address the barriers that exist at the organisational level which inhibit people with disability from aspiring to leadership positions.

It will be critical that any strategy to increase leadership by people with disability should have its effectiveness tracked across both public and private industries.

We say that a National Human Rights Act would create a positive obligation to address educational and employment barriers.

Know someone who deserves their own copy of **One in Six**?

Let us know at hello@deafnessforum.org.au

Items in Deafness Forum's various communication channels may include terminology or summarise views, standards or recommendations of third parties, which are assembled in good faith but may not reflect our views or indicate commitment to a particular course of action. Content derived from various sources may contain offensive or ableist terms, and some content may not be accessible to all audiences. We make no representation or warranty about the accuracy, reliability, currency or completeness of any third-party information. We want to be newsworthy, informative and interesting, and our aim is to be balanced and to represent views from throughout our community sector, even views that might be unpopular or spark controversy. We try to be always open to providing an opportunity for expression of different views. This might not be reflected, for example in all editions of this newsletter. We do not enter into discussions about editorial decisions and policy. Articles may be edited for accessibility, style and length. You are most welcome to contact us to suggest article topics, advocacy issues, offer criticism and to receive this newsletter in an alternative file type.



INTERNATIONAL WEEK
OF DEAF PEOPLE



INTERNATIONAL DAY
OF SIGN LANGUAGES