

POLICY



Auslan

Purpose	<p>Deaf Australia's Auslan policy aims to strengthen the status of Auslan and to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. raise the profile of the Australian Deaf community and its language, Auslan; and 2. provide the basis underpinning Deaf Australia's continued lobbying of the Australian Government, state governments and non-government organisations in order to achieve full equality for Deaf people in the Australian community.
Overview	<p>The major role underpinning the existence of Deaf Australia is to enhance the status of sign language in Australian society and to ensure that Australian Deaf people are able to exercise their linguistic human rights (their right to use Auslan). If sign language is rejected, the situation of Deaf people is weak and unequal. (WFD Manual 1994:41)</p> <p>This policy calls for the legal recognition of Deaf people's right to use Auslan, and for appropriate provision of Auslan teaching and Auslan training and research programs.</p>
Scope	<p>Government agencies and departments (Local, State/ Territory, and Federal), media, employers, educational institutions, service providers, community organisations and individuals.</p>
The Policy	<p>Sign language is seen as the main feature that defines any Deaf community. The use of sign language covers a wide range of areas in everyday life of the Deaf person. It impacts areas where language is an essential tool in the life of a person, ranging from family life through to media and telecommunications, entertainment and including education, employment and community access.</p> <p>The major role underpinning the existence of Deaf Australia is to enhance the status of sign language in Australian society and to ensure that Australian Deaf people are able to exercise their linguistic human rights (their right to use sign language). If sign language is rejected, the situation of Deaf people is weak and unequal. (WFD Manual 1994:41)</p> <p>Auslan (Australian Sign Language) is the native language of many Deaf people who have Deaf parents and of many hearing children of Deaf parents. It is the primary or preferred language of many Deaf</p>

people who do not have Deaf parents but have learned Auslan later in their lives.

Recognition of Auslan

The Australian Government has recognised the Deaf community as a language group:

It is now increasingly recognised that signing deaf people constitute a group like any other non-English speaking language group in Australia, with a distinct sub-culture recognised by shared history, social life and sense of identity, united and symbolised by fluency in Auslan, the principal means of communication within the Australian Deaf Community. (Dawkins 1991:20)

This means that Auslan is seen by the Australian Government as the language of a distinct linguistic minority group.

While this recognition is helpful, Deaf Australia believes it is not enough to ensure that Deaf people are able to realise their linguistic human rights.

The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* contains several articles which specifically refer to Deaf people's right to use Auslan. Australia ratified this Convention on 17th July 2008, and has an obligation to ensure that its requirements are met.

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* provides Deaf people with legal recourse if they have been refused the right to use Auslan. However, anti-discrimination legislation is complaints-based and places the onus on the Deaf person rather than on the general community to ensure that Auslan can be used.

Australia's Deaf people need stronger legal protection of their right to use Auslan.

Deaf Australia calls for:

1. recognition within Australian legislation of Deaf people's right to use Auslan;
2. increased participation in Australian society by Deaf people through the use of interpreters and the provision of information in Auslan in the mass media;
3. the Australian Government and state governments to abolish any remaining obstacles to the use of Auslan as the primary and everyday language of Deaf people, e.g., as a language of education; and
4. the provision of information in Auslan either directly to the Deaf person or through an accredited Auslan interpreter at no cost to the Deaf person.

Provision of Auslan teaching

Deaf Australia believes that training programs are essential and that all Deaf and hearing individuals should have the opportunity to learn Auslan. Auslan is the second language of many Deaf people who do not acquire it spontaneously, but through their education, and these Deaf people should have the right to learn and use Auslan at school.

Deaf Australia recognises the following groups as essential target groups for the provision of Auslan training:

1. Deaf children;
2. Deaf adults who wish to study Auslan as an academic course of study;
3. Deaf-Blind people through specialised programs of instruction;
4. Deaf people with no prior knowledge of Auslan;
5. deafened and hard of hearing individuals;
6. parents, relatives and friends of Deaf children;
7. professionals working with Deaf children and adults;
8. teachers of the Deaf; and
9. school students who wish to learn Auslan as a language other than English.

Auslan training and research programs

For equal access to occur in the Australian community, education, services and information must be provided in Auslan to the Australian Deaf community. To enable this, appropriately accredited programs are required for the training of people to become professionals such as teachers, service providers and Auslan interpreters, to name a few.

Deaf Australia promotes:

1. the training of qualified teachers to teach Auslan which includes academic courses at universities, training seminars and workshops to train Deaf people to become qualified Auslan teachers; and
2. the provision of the teaching of Auslan as a community language at all levels of education: from pre-school, primary and secondary levels to tertiary (including institutes of technical and further education and universities) sectors.

The teaching of Auslan must be closely linked with research programs at appropriate institutions such as universities, research institutes and educational institutions. These institutions should maintain close links with Deaf Australia and the research that results from these activities should guide the teaching of sign language, the training of interpreters, and the training of parents and professionals.

Deaf Australia supports:

1. increasing knowledge about sign language through scientific

	<p>research, especially in the field of linguistics;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. the development and maintenance of sign language dictionaries for reference by Deaf people, Auslan students, teachers of Deaf people, sign language interpreters and other professionals who work closely with Deaf people; 3. the employment of Deaf people who are fluent native users of Auslan, who should also be recognised as the legitimate arbiters in the correct usage of Auslan and who should hold significant positions in research efforts; 4. the provision of funds to enable the training of Deaf people to teach or carry out research in order to enable research to occur; 5. the provision of funds to enable the training of sign language interpreters at tertiary institutions; and 6. the participation of Deaf people in national and international conferences concerning sign language and the dissemination of research findings which will inform Deaf people in other countries about research on their languages.
Keywords	Auslan, Deaf, Deaf people, language.
References	<p>Grosjean, F. (1992) The Bilingual and the Bicultural person in the Hearing and in the Deaf World. In <i>Sign Language Studies</i>, Winter 1992.</p> <p>Dawkins, J (1991). Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy. Australian Government Printing Service: Canberra.</p> <p>The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993): United Nations: New York.</p> <p>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006.</p> <p>Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 (Cth).</p>

Date Approved	19/ 11/ 2010
Date of Commencement	19/ 11/ 2010
Amendment Dates	
Date for Next Review	November 2013
Related Policy, Procedure and Guidelines	
Policies Superseded by this Policy	Auslan Policy (earlier versions)