



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
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Chair), Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into access to services
and information in Auslan

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Hello,

I'm a [REDACTED], and I believe access to services and information in Auslan is very important. I hope the committee prioritises Deaf voices, in the submissions and within the committee itself, but thought I'd provide the following information in case it helps.

- Auslan is a whole and distinct language, complete with a full vocabulary, grammatical system, and rich culture surrounding it. It is NOT signed English, keyword sign, or variations on this.

- Learning Auslan does NOT hinder spoken language, and there should therefore be no problems with deaf children learning both.

The main barrier for deaf children learning both Auslan and spoken language is access to Auslan. It is very difficult to get it funded by NDIS as it is seen as non-essential, despite its importance to Deaf culture and identity. Currently, families of deaf children are put in a position where they have to 'choose' between focusing on spoken language and learning some Auslan as an 'extra' OR supporting their deaf child to learn Auslan as a native language. The latter often depends on parents being native signers or children attending very specific schools, of which there are VERY few. Neither option should have to compromise the other, as children are perfectly capable of learning more than one native language with sufficient exposure. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that bilingualism has benefits cognitively and socially.

In sum, NDIS should fund Auslan courses for deaf people and their families. Also, early learning environments for children, such as preschools, should be specifically set up to support bilingualism with Auslan.

Please note that my perspective is focused on children and language acquisition in the early years, due to the nature of my work - this should not detract from the importance of access for deaf adults.

If any parts of my submission are to be publicised, I ask that you leave my personal details out, including information about my work.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]