



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
Mr Michael Petterson MLA (Chair), Mr Jonathan Davis MLA (Deputy
Chair), Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into access to services
and information in Auslan

Submission Number: 32

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Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601
Via email to: LACommitteeECI@parliament.act.gov.au

27 July 2022

Dear Legislative Assembly colleagues,

Re: Inquiry in relation to access to services and information in Auslan

We appreciate the opportunity to write to this Inquiry and provide this letter in support of the petitioner's requests, and in support of submissions of Advocacy for Inclusion, and ACTCOSS, and of others from the Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing communities.

About ADACAS:

ADACAS is a disability advocacy* service providing individual advocacy to and working with people with disability, people who experience mental ill health, older people and carers. We advocate to support people to access services and supports in a range of areas including (but not limited to): housing; quality of services; access to justice; aged care services; child protection; domestic violence; NDIS access and appeals; and Redress Scheme support. We have supported many people through the NDIS Appeals process, and also offer an Aged Care Navigation service and support to those accessing the Redress scheme (for people who have experienced institutional child sex abuse). We have been operating in the ACT for 30 years and more recently commenced working with people living with disability in specific parts of NSW. ADACAS acknowledges the Ngunnawal people, the Ngambri, Dharawal, Yuin and Wiradjuri people as the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work, and pay our respects to their Elders, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in our communities. ADACAS is a member of both the Disability Advocacy Network of Australia and the Older Persons Advocacy Network, both of which represent organisations working with people with disability across all areas of Australia.

Support for petition:

We at ADACAS very strongly support calls from people who use Auslan in the ACT about the need to increase the provision of services and information in Auslan across the nominated settings (aged care, education and training, emergency services, employment, health care, justice, media (including Government announcements) and in relation to social opportunities, and to increase policy and legislative mechanisms that would allow this to occur. We observe the need for governance arrangements to ensure implementation, and support mechanisms that allow for public reporting on progress. We comment on some of these areas in the section below.

Human rights:

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons' with Disability (UNCRPD), Australia, we underline responsibilities of Australian federal and territory governments to uphold international obligations: we especially highlight provisions outlined in Article 2 (definition, which defines that language includes both spoken and signed languages), Article 9, on Accessibility, Article 21 (on Freedom of expression, opinion and access to information), Article 24 on Education and Article 30 (Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and support) and more. We further highlight that

for people who use Auslan, access to Auslan can be pivotal in permitting many if not most other human rights to be upheld.

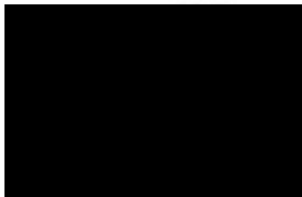
ADACAS also emphasises the very negative impacts that lack of interpreters in Aged care (and many other) settings can have (in terms of health and wellbeing). In terms of aged care - we support the suggestions put forward re exploring whether partnerships could be developed between existing residential aged care facilities and Deaf/deaf community, with the facility/es to emphasise much greater education and awareness about the rights of Deaf/deaf people and seek to employ (and train) staff to fluency in Auslan etc.

Workforce issues

We especially endorse the commentary on workforce in both the Advocacy for Inclusion and ACTCOSS submission: the availability, professionalism and quality of interpreting available, can have an immense impact on whether a person is able to access vital information and make informed decisions about their healthcare, legal rights, etc. There is an urgent need to increase the numbers of NAATI qualified interpreters working in the Territory, especially those working at the professional level (certified), and those who are certified specialist legal interpreters and certified specialist health interpreters. It is also imperative that Auslan tuition is offered in ways that allow for fluency to be more quickly developed (for example, more educators able to assist in situations where hearing families are seeking tutoring to improve their Auslan fluency quickly in support of a deaf child).

Please do not hesitate to contact us, should you have any questions about this response.

Sincerely



Wendy Prowse
CEO
ADACAS



* For information about advocacy in Auslan see: <https://deafaustralia.org.au/advocacy/>. Alongside these definitions, please note: ADACAS is predominantly an individual advocacy organisation, although we do employ one systemic advocate. Individual advocates may also at times support people with disability to self-advocate. We do not offer a citizen advocacy program.