



Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Education and
Community Inclusion

Inquiry into access to services and information in Auslan

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Approved for publication

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About the committee

Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion on 2 December 2020.

The Committee is responsible for the following areas:

- Early Childhood Development
- Education
- Youth Affairs
- Skills
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
- Multicultural Affairs
- Disability
- Women (including the Office for Women)
- Seniors
- Veterans
- LGBTIQ+
- Sport and Recreation

You can read the full establishing resolution [on our website](#).

Committee members

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA, Chair

Mr Johnathan Davis MLA, Deputy Chair

Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Secretariat

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Dr David Monk, Committee Secretary (until 1 July 2022)

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About this inquiry

The petition 33-21 concerning Auslan rights was presented to the Assembly on 8 February 2022. Because the petition has over 500 signatures, it was referred to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion.

At its meeting on 26 April 2022 the Committee resolved to inquire into this matter and to report back to the Assembly in December 2022. This was amended on 2 November 2022 when the Committee resolved to report to the Assembly by 28 February 2023.

Terms of reference

At its meeting on 26 April 2022, the Committee agreed to the following terms of reference:

- a) the disadvantage and discrimination faced by Deaf people due to lack of access to services and information in Auslan.
- b) options to strengthen and enforce legislation and policy to increase provision of services and information in Auslan across the public and private sectors in the following settings:
 - aged care;
 - education and training;
 - emergency services;
 - employment;
 - health care;
 - justice;
 - media (including Government announcements); and
 - social opportunities.
- c) the creation of agreed objectives and targets relating to these settings against which progress on the quantity and quality of services and information in Auslan can be measured.
- d) public reporting of progress against those objectives and targets.

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Acronyms

Acronym	Long form
ADACAS	ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service Inc.
ALA	Australian Lawyers Alliance
ASLIA	Australian Sign Language Interpreters' Association
Auslan	Australian Sign Language
BSL	British Sign Language
CIT	Canberra Institute of Technology
HoH	Hard-of-hearing
LGA	Local government area
LOTE	Languages other than English
NAATI	National Accreditation for Translators and Interpreters
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

- That the ACT Government establish an Auslan Taskforce within the ACT government and invite key stakeholders in the ACT Deaf community as well as service providers and peak body organisations to participate and co-design a territory-wide Auslan strategy.
- That the taskforce's considerations include the following recommendations in this report.

Recommendation 2

That the ACT Government legislate Auslan as an official language.

Recommendation 3

That the ACT Government investigate existing Australian and international laws regarding the right to an interpreter in order to ascertain whether local legislative reform is required in order to ensure that this right is ensured for ACT residents.

Recommendation 4

That the ACT Government and public agencies translate highly trafficked webpages into Auslan and create provision for Deaf people to forward queries, feedback and submissions in Auslan.

Recommendation 5

That the ACT Government establish a comprehensive emergency SMS system that has the capacity to both send and receive messages.

Recommendation 6

That the ACT Government legislate all emergency warning systems in buildings (including Bimberi Youth Justice and Alexander Maconochie Centres) to include mechanisms that alert deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

Recommendation 7

That the ACT Government investigate how many Deafblind people are residents of the ACT.

Recommendation 8

That the ACT Legislative Assembly make proceedings and materials accessible, via Auslan, to the Deaf community.

Recommendation 9

That the ACT Government incentivise local theatre companies, live entertainment venues and cinemas to ensure accessibility for Deaf audiences.

Recommendation 10

That the ACT Government establish a Deaf Hub ('one-stop shop' for services to the Deaf community).

Recommendation 11

That the ACT Government provide financial assistance to DeafACT.

Recommendation 12

That the ACT Government reintroduce certified Auslan courses through the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Recommendation 13

That the ACT Government adopt targets for higher numbers of certified Auslan-English interpreters within the ACT.

Recommendation 14

That the ACT Government implement a casual sick pay scheme that covers Auslan interpreters.

Recommendation 15

That the ACT Government provide subsidies to students of Auslan, including scholarships.

Recommendation 16

That the ACT Government establish a dedicated facility for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students in a mainstream school.

Recommendation 17

That the ACT Government liaise with relevant organisations in order to establish dedicated, formal and frequent learning and social networks for Deaf school students throughout the ACT and Australia.

Recommendation 18

That the ACT Government investigate the current delivery status of the subject of Auslan (LOTE, Australian Curriculum, F-10) in ACT schools with the view to increasing the offering of this subject throughout a range of year levels and schools.

Recommendation 19

That ACT Courts update their practices for interpreting and associated communication throughout the judiciary and court staff in order to ensure that the courts are aware of their obligations for provision of services, including Auslan.

Recommendation 20

That the ACT Government provide mandatory training to ACT Policing on Deaf awareness and booking interpreting services.

Recommendation 21

That the ACT Government ensure culturally-appropriate prison services for Deaf and hard-of-hearing inmates.

Recommendation 22

That Canberra Health Services provide Deaf awareness training and equipment/resources to hospital staff, which include:

- the right to an interpreter in emergency departments and during mental health emergencies
- the communication needs of Deaf patients.
- access to face-to-face and on-call telephone and remote Auslan interpreting services
- information about Auslan to families, immediately after newborn hearing screening.

Recommendation 23

That the ACT Government liaise with the NDIS to encourage the scheme to fund Auslan courses for families of Deaf children.

Recommendation 24

That the ACT Government provide appropriate aged care facilities in the ACT to accommodate deaf Canberrans.

Recommendation 25

That the ACT Government fund access to support technology for ACT Deaf residents, aged over 65.

1. Introduction

Conduct of the Inquiry

- 1.1. Following the Committee's resolution to inquire into the matters raised by the petition concerning Auslan rights, a media release, advising the public of the inquiry and inviting submissions, was published on 31 May 2022.
- 1.2. 33 submissions were received from a range of organisations and individuals. These are listed in **Appendix A**.
- 1.3. On 15 June 2022, the Committee attended a morning tea hosted by members of the Deaf community, where matters pertaining to government services, employment, transport, aged care, education, health care and leisure activities were discussed.
- 1.4. On 25 October 2022, the Committee conducted a public hearing into the inquiry. Witnesses who appeared at the hearing are listed in **Appendix B**.
- 1.5. In November 2022, the Committee conducted visits to schools that cater to Deaf students in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra.
- 1.6. Throughout this report, lower case 'deaf' is used to describe the physical condition of hearing loss. Upper case 'Deaf' is used to refer to those who identify as culturally Deaf (see section entitled 'Deaf culture' this report) and use sign language as their primary language.

Sign language

- 1.7. In 1880, the Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf, held in Milan, Italy, agreed that sign language was not the ideal pedagogy for deaf students. This decision influenced a global ban on sign language in classrooms with deaf children, who, as a result, were expected to learn to speak and lip-read.¹
- 1.8. In New Zealand, sign language was banned in classrooms for the deaf from 1880 to 1979. This resulted in the migration of many deaf children to Melbourne and Sydney, Australia.²
- 1.9. Australian linguist Trevor Johnston notes:

The first schools for the deaf in Australia were established relatively early (in the 1860s) compared to those in most other countries.... When one looks at the core of the signing Deaf community in Australia, one is not looking at a language that has emerged or re-emerged in a single generation, but one which had a continuity of more than 2 centuries.³

¹ Adam Schembri (2010). 'Documenting Sign Languages'. In Peter K. Austin (ed.) *Language Documentation and Description*, vol 7. London: SOAS: 105-143. p. 120.

² Adam Schembri (2010). 'Documenting sign languages'. In Peter K. Austin (ed.) *Language Documentation and Description*, vol 7. London: SOAS: 105-143. p. 120.

³ Trevor A. Johnston, 'W(h)ither the Deaf Community? Population, Genetics, and the Future of Australian Sign Language', *American Annals of the Deaf*, 148 (5), Spring 204: 358-275, p. 373.

- 1.10. On 19 December 2017, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 23 September as the International Day of Sign Languages, following a proposal from the World Federation of the Deaf, that represents the rights of the 70 million deaf people globally.⁴
- 1.11. There are different sign languages throughout the world. Sign languages are not literal, visual representations of every spoken word. Instead, sign languages are comprised of differing vocabulary and grammar than spoken language. Auslan refers to Australian Sign Language. Australasian Signed English, unlike Auslan, is a 'manual code for Spoken English' and is not the language of the Deaf community:⁵

Auslan is the key tool in the inclusion of Deaf people in both Deaf communities and in society. This fosters the building of Deaf people's identities and their sense of belonging to their communities.⁶

Deaf culture

- 1.12. Deaf Connect⁷ described the two overall constructions of deafness in its submission to the inquiry:
- a medical/deficit model in which deafness is viewed as 'an impairment which requires treatment in the form of auditory and speech training, to achieve 'normalcy'.
 - A social or cultural-linguistic model which shifts the focus of deafness away from deficiency to difference. This challenge to 'the "normalising" of the medical model'...'does not exclude hearing technology and speech therapy... Rather than attention being solely on auditory deficits, attention is also given to visual possibilities'. A cultural linguistic model emphasises the benefits of sign language or bilingualism.⁸
- 1.13. Expression Australia asserts that the medical model of disability 'often results in language deprivation' for deaf and hard-of-hearing (HoH) people, 'which in turn reduces the ability to access to services and information in Auslan'.⁹
- 1.14. The concept of Deaf identity comprises 'an affirmative and positive acceptance of being deaf'¹⁰ as exemplified by submitters to the inquiry:

⁴ United Nations, International Day of Sign Languages 23 September [International Day of Sign Languages | United Nations](#) (accessed 14 November 2022).

⁵ Adam Schembri (2010). 'Documenting sign languages'. In Peter K. Austin (ed.) *Language Documentation and Description*, vol 7. London: SOAS. pp. 105-143, pp. 106-107.

⁶ Deaf Australia, *Submission 33*, p. 4.

⁷ Deaf Connect is a national not-for-profit organisation comprising the former Deaf Services Limited (established in 1903) and the Deaf Society (established in 1913), *Submission 24*, p. 3.

⁸ Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, p. 5.

⁹ Expression Australia, trading as the 'Victorian Deaf Society', established in 1884, is a not-for-profit organisation that supports and provides services to the Deaf community. Expression Australia, *Submission 15*, p. 1.

¹⁰ Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, p. 4. See Paddy Ladd (2003) *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

When I functioned in the hearing community, I didn't understand what was going on. So I had a cochlear implant at the Shepherd Centre, and I started to learn speech and had auditory training. But at one point the teacher said to me that, 'You need to not use Auslan anymore', and, 'Just focus on your speech, because this will give you a better future in the hearing world with getting a job'.

And that really had a profound impact on me. And from that day on, basically, I did not wear my cochlear implant anymore, because I was very much a Deaf person with a Deaf identity.¹¹

- 1.15. A hearing parent explained to the Committee the importance of supporting the Deaf identity of her son:

I want to protect his identity and his ability to thrive and I want him to be a full person who is proud of his deafness.¹²

Audism

- 1.16. 'Audism' refers to discrimination against deaf people and is informed by a medical model of deafness.¹³

- 1.17. Deaf Australia identifies the following as examples of audism:

- refusal or failure to use sign language in the presence of a sign language-dependent person, even though you know how to sign.
- refusal to source or fund an Auslan interpreter when requested.
- disparaging a deaf or hard-of-hearing person for a weakness in verbal language, even if they are skilled in sign language.
- insisting that deaf and hard-of-hearing people conform to the hearing community.
- an unwillingness to accommodate someone's auditory needs.
- fostering low educational and career expectations of deaf people.
- viewing deafness as misfortune.
- wage and promotion discrimination in the workplace.
- assuming those with better speech/English skills are superior.
- asking a deaf person to modify their facial expressions because they are making others uncomfortable.
- supporting social exclusion through a refusal to explain to deaf people why everyone around them is laughing – 'Never mind, I'll tell you later. It doesn't matter'.
- not permitting deaf people to fulfil jury duty.

¹¹ Bradley Jones, *Submission 1*.

¹² Dr Louise Farrer, Parent, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 32.

¹³ Deaf Australia, *Submission 33*, p. 6.

- speaking to the interpreter and not to the deaf person.¹⁴
- 1.18. Participants in the inquiry shared their experiences of audism which can be understood via the notion of ‘Deaf anxiety’. Such anxiety is exemplified when Deaf people are constantly compelled to negotiate accessibility.¹⁵
- 1.19. The fostering of low career expectations was illustrated by one submitter who recalled his schooling experience in Canberra, where, as the only Deaf student in the school, he was not afforded career guidance, unlike his hearing peers.¹⁶
- 1.20. Participants also shared other personal experiences of isolation. One submitter conveyed workplace incidents which could have been remedied if employers utilised the Australian Government’s Employment Assistance Fund, providing financial help to people with a disability.¹⁷

I had a bad experience at a work meeting...where they did not book an interpreter.

They said, ‘You can go home. You don’t need to stay for this meeting’.

How am I meant to participate? It is basic rights to make sure that there is an interpreter available.¹⁸

- 1.21. In this report, the associated adjective ‘audist’ is used to refer to policies and practices that cultivate discrimination against those who are Deaf or HoH.

2. Cross-sectoral collaboration

- 2.1. The ACT Government is a signatory to *Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-31* and is also developing its own *ACT Disability Strategy*. Both are informed by a social model of disability that:

seeks to change society in order to remove barriers for people with disability; it does not seek to change people with disability to accommodate society.¹⁹

- 2.2. The Committee, throughout this Inquiry, gained information concerning the importance of Deaf, Deafblind and HoH people having access to language and communication in order to prosper in work, schools, in their homes and in the wider community.²⁰

¹⁴ Deaf Australia, *Submission 33*, p. 7.

¹⁵ The notion of Deaf anxiety was introduced to the Committee by the Director of Business Development of Convo Australia. Mr Todd Wright, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 70. This follows the initial discussion from Artie Williams in 2017: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmlEq8JnBC0>. Convo Australia is a Deaf-owned, Deaf-led company that provides online interpreting services.

¹⁶ Bradley Jones, *Submission 1*.

¹⁷ Australian Government, ‘Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)’, 9 November 2022, [Employment Assistance Fund \(EAF\) | Job Access](#).

¹⁸ Bradley Jones, *Submission 1*.

¹⁹ ACT Government, *Submission 17*, p. 2.

²⁰ Brent Phillips, Chief Impact Officer, Deaf Connect, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 65.

- 2.3. Given that access to services and information in Auslan requires embedded policy, incentives and associated best practice in a range of sectors,²¹ it is the view of the Committee that the ACT Government establish a dedicated Auslan taskforce so that territory-wide Auslan policies are not potentially diluted in a generalist strategy (as important as the *ACT Disability Strategy* is).
- 2.4. This targeted approach, which could be fulfilled by an Auslan taskforce, has similar precedents in the initiatives following the *British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015* and the *British Sign Language Act 2022*. The Committee's following recommendation for an Auslan taskforce is informed by Deaf Connect's suggestion and that such a taskforce could:
- invite key stakeholders in the ACT deaf community including community leaders, service providers and peak body organisations to participate and co-design a territory-wide Auslan strategy. The taskforce should be responsible for identifying opportunities to strengthen and legislate policies to increase the provision of services in Auslan throughout the ACT and publicly report on its progress annually.²²
- 2.5. The representation of the Deaf community, including organisations created by Deaf people, in the co-design of policies that enable the provision of Auslan would fulfil the philosophy of 'There is nothing about us without us'.²³ Expression Australia promotes the creation of agreed objectives and targets so that the 'progress on the quantity and quality of services and information in Auslan can be measured' and public reporting of associated progress.²⁴
- 2.6. The Committee notes the ACT Government's commitment, as part of its development of the *ACT Disability Strategy*, to the 'nothing about us without us' philosophy, evident in its engagement with the Disability Reference Groups, which includes members of ACT's Deaf Community.
- 2.7. The Committee also notes, in its submission to this inquiry, the ACT Government's ideas for change to enable access to services and information in Auslan²⁵ and recommends that the establishment of a targeted task force will help to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the provision of Auslan services.

²¹ As discussed, for example, by Brent Phillips, Chief Impact Officer, Deaf Connect, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 67.

²² Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, p. 21.

²³ 'Nothing about us without us' is the slogan of the disability rights movement. See James I. Charlton (1998) *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

²⁴ Expression Australia, *Submission 15*, p. 3.

²⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 17*, p. 6.

Recommendation 1

- That the ACT Government establish an Auslan Taskforce within the ACT government and invite key stakeholders in the ACT Deaf community as well as service providers and peak body organisations to participate and co-design a territory-wide Auslan strategy.
- That the taskforce's considerations include the following recommendations in this report.

Legislation

- 2.8. The Australian Lawyers Alliance (ALA) notes, in its submission, that the *Human Rights Act 2004* includes rights and obligations concerning access to justice and rights in criminal proceedings. The *Discrimination Act 1991* also 'enshrine[s] a shared legislative objective to eliminate discrimination against people living with a disability, including in the provision of systems and services'.²⁶ However, the *Discrimination Act 1991* does not make mention of Auslan.
- 2.9. Expression Australian advocates for the amendment of the *Discrimination Act 1991* and the *Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) so that it recognises 'Auslan as a cultural and linguistic right for deaf and hard-of-hearing people'.²⁷ Expression Australia also states that legislative amendments should require government departments to 'allow consumers to specify whether their preferred language of communication is Auslan'.²⁸
- 2.10. The Committee notes an international precedent of the *British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015*, which requires Scottish ministers to promote the use of British Sign Language through a National Plan.²⁹ Similarly, the *British Sign Language Act 2022* recognises British Sign Language (BSL) as a national language and requires government departments to report on their promotion and facilitation of the use of BSL.³⁰
- 2.11. The Australian Lawyers Alliance promotes the revision of relevant legislative instruments to ensure access to justice, interpreters (and other communication accessibility services) and information about 'all services and procedures'.³¹

²⁶ Australian Lawyers Alliance, *Submission 31*, p. 10.

²⁷ Expression Australia, *Submission 15*, pp 3-4.

²⁸ Expression Australia, *Submission 15*, p. 3.

²⁹ Legislation.gov.uk, 'British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015', <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/11/section/1/enacted>

³⁰ Scottish Government, 'British Sign Language (BSL): National Plan 2017 to 2023', 24 October 2017, [British Sign Language \(BSL\): National Plan 2017 to 2023 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/sign-language-bsl-national-plan-2017-to-2023/pages/1/introduction.aspx).

³¹ Australian Lawyers Alliance, *Submission 31*, p. 11.

Recommendation 2

That the ACT Government legislate Auslan as an official language.

Recommendation 3

That the ACT Government investigate existing Australian and international laws regarding the right to an interpreter in order to ascertain whether local legislative reform is required in order to ensure that this right is ensured for ACT residents.

Public communication

2.12. In 2008, the Australian Government ratified the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.³² Articles 29 and 30 affirm that state parties guarantee political rights by ensuring ‘that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others’ and recognise ‘the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life’.³³

2.13. Inquiry participants³⁴ related the barriers to basic access in sites of service provisions but noted that a ticket numbering system is helpful:

What I have liked in the past at Access Canberra (or previously the RTA), was their numbered ticketing system. Once you have a ticket, you would sit down. I could visually see the ticket numbers appearing on the screen. When my ticket number appeared, I would then go to the window screen. ... It would be ideal if this system was used elsewhere. I understand there is a cost but it’s very visual and very deaf friendly. It would be just so easy to follow this system in banks, offices, etc and minimize our stress or anxiety – at least a visual system or along those lines.³⁵

2.14. The Committee learned about the frustration that deaf people may experience when unable to access public transport due to spoken-only announcements concerning changes to arrivals and departures.³⁶

³² Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, p. 16.

³³ United Nations (Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Disability), ‘Article 29 – Participation in political and public life’, [Article 29 – Participation in political and public life | United Nations Enable](#); ‘Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport’, [Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport | United Nations Enable](#).

³⁴ Bradley Jones, *Submission 1*, Laisarn Leong, *Submission 7*, p. 1.

³⁵ Laisarn Leong, *Submission 7*, p. 1.

³⁶ Bradley Jones, *Submission 1*.

- 2.15. Inquiry participants provided insight into the use of closed captions, noting that they are only an effective tool for deaf people whose first language is English but not helpful for those whose primary language is Auslan.³⁷
- 2.16. Participation in civic life should not be confined to Deaf people's passive absorption of information and should also include means for Deaf people to contribute:

It is very rarely, if ever, possible for somebody to submit information to a website in Auslan, even when information is made available in Auslan.³⁸

Recommendation 4

That the ACT Government and public agencies translate highly trafficked webpages into Auslan and create provision for Deaf people to forward queries, feedback and submissions in Auslan.

Emergencies

- 2.17. The Committee learned of the challenges for deaf people in responding to disasters. These challenges result from lack of effective communication where messaging is not translated into Auslan. This has implications for understanding locations of evacuation points, for example.³⁹
- 2.18. One submitter wrote:
- Emergency situations are terribly frightening for everyone and not having access to their first/only or preferred language increases anxiety and stress.⁴⁰
- 2.19. Another submitter noted the lack of clarity concerning:
- whether or not there is an SMS contact for the 000-emergency number
 - how the emergency SMS alert system functions,
- also noting that mental health, domestic violence, and rape crisis services are not accessible via SMS.⁴¹

³⁷ Mr Jacob Clarke, President, DeafACT, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, pp 8-9; Ms Laisarn Leong, Teacher of the Deaf, ACT Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 15; Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, p. 17; Ms Sherrie Beaver, Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project Lead, Expression Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, pp. 61-62.

³⁸ Mr Ben McAtamney, National Advocacy Officer, Deafblind Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 46.

³⁹ Deaf Connect, *Submission 30*, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁰ Name withheld from publishing, *Submission 26*, p. 1.

⁴¹ Amanda Dolejsi, *Submission 8*, pp. 3-4.

Recommendation 5

That the ACT Government establish a comprehensive emergency SMS system that has the capacity to both send and receive messages.

- 2.20. One submitter wrote about their being left unattended during workplace evacuations as a result of audist fire alarm systems and stating the need for visual emergency signs and warnings.⁴²
- 2.21. Announcements made over public address systems in prisons and detention centres may also be inaccessible to deaf people.⁴³

Recommendation 6

That the ACT Government legislate all emergency warning systems in buildings (including Bimberi Youth Justice and Alexander Maconochie Centres) to include mechanisms that alert deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

- 2.22. The Committee also recommends that the ACT Government attend to the needs of the Deafblind community which includes users of tactile Auslan.
- 2.23. The Committee noted the absence of information about the numbers of Deafblind people in the ACT⁴⁴ and recommends that this be remedied through targeted research.

Recommendation 7

That the ACT Government investigate how many Deafblind people are residents of the ACT.

ACT Legislative Assembly

- 2.24. Witnesses at the inquiry's public hearing emphasised the importance of access to political life. They highlighted:

..[I]n terms of engagement with civic life or political processes.... we see the impact of that language deprivation and not having access to the patter of the town in the same way that hearing and sighted people do.⁴⁵

Generally speaking, the Deaf community have a low level of civic education, which means that the Deaf community often absorb politics or parliamentary information but they do not have a full understanding of what that means. They

⁴² Greg Ophel, *Submission 5*, p. 1.

⁴³ Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, p. 18.

⁴⁴ Mr Ben McAtamney, National Advocacy Officer, Deafblind Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 46.

⁴⁵ Mr Ben McAtamney, National Advocacy Officer, Deafblind Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 50.

therefore do not have a lot of confidence when it comes to voting or engaging in political discussion, or they are not very confident in talking about what they want to see happen in their LGA.⁴⁶

- 2.25. The Committee notes the monthly Parliament Bulletin made available in Auslan by the Parliament of Victoria as an effective way to engage Victoria's Deaf community in parliamentary matters.⁴⁷
- 2.26. A Member of the ACT Legislative Assembly, as well as senior staff of the Office of the ACT Legislative Assembly, were invited to speak at the hearing for the inquiry, of the Procedure Committee of the NSW Legislative Council, into Auslan interpretation for broadcasting. Given this support from the ACT Legislative Assembly to a NSW inquiry which seeks to vary the standing orders to 'introduce live Auslan interpretation in the broadcasting of all or part of the Legislative Council's proceedings'⁴⁸, it is the view of the Committee that the ACT Legislative Assembly, itself, enact this reform.

Recommendation 8

That the ACT Legislative Assembly make proceedings and materials accessible, via Auslan, to the Deaf community.

Leisure

- 2.27. In addition to core provisions related to education, health and justice, the Committee noted the importance of access for the Deaf community to leisure activities. Ms Leong highlights this issue through her lived experience:

To further support our daughter's access to entertainment and community events as a deaf person, we find we need to travel interstate for events such as Deaf Community meet ups, accessible Science Academy days and interpreted theatre shows (Frozen, Disney on Ice) as these shows do not come to Canberra. In Australia access to sign language on TV is fairly limited to emergency press conferences, whereas overseas, in the United Kingdom for example, BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters are commonplace across a variety of TV shows. At many tourist attractions and government services in the UK, BSL is available as a language option. For example, a number of museums offer self-guided tours in different languages including BSL via phone apps or on screens. Offering this

⁴⁶ Ms Sherrie Beaver, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 61.

⁴⁷ As discussed by Ms. Sherrie Beaver, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 61. See: <https://new.parliament.vic.gov.au/news/general-news/auslan-bulletin/>

⁴⁸ NSW Parliament Legislative Council Procedure Committee, Auslan Interpretation for Broadcasting: Report 16, November 2022, p.1 <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2860/Report%20No%2016%20-%20Auslan%20interpretation%20for%20broadcasting.pdf> [List of representatives from the ACT Legislative Assembly is on p. 3]

provides not only accessibility but also awareness and acceptance of BSL as another valid language option.⁴⁹

I moved from Sydney two years ago to here [ACT]. Hoyts Cinemas provided several movies with captions, but I was disappointed with the much smaller list of movies that were captioned in the ACT. I believe that all movies should be captioned so that we have the option of seeing which movie titles at any time to give us pleasure in our lives.⁵⁰

Recommendation 9

That the ACT Government incentivise local theatre companies, live entertainment venues and cinemas to ensure accessibility for Deaf audiences.

- 2.28. A board member of DeafACT expressed her wish for the establishment of a Deaf hub, which could accommodate socialisation as described above as well as support cross-sectoral and intergenerational information and associated meetings:

a one stop-shop for all services, all needs, for members of the Deaf community—access to Auslan, a Deaf club for socialisation, a playgroup for Deaf children and parents, speech therapy—just a centre where all services that are deafness-related can be accessed.⁵¹

Recommendation 10

That the ACT Government establish a Deaf Hub ('one-stop shop' for services to the Deaf community).

Advocacy

- 2.29. The Committee understands the importance of the advocacy role of DeafACT in its work in lobbying for service provision for the local Deaf community. One subcommittee member, who is the representative for families for DeafACT, wrote:

I am essentially the driving force behind any formal supports that commenced in the ACT because I became tired of hoping that they would exist.⁵²

- 2.30. The President of DeafACT explained to the Committee that members of the organisation are keen to liaise with the ACT Government:

DeafACT is a not-for-profit organisation. We are not a service provider; we are a support to the community—advocacy, recreation, sports. For me, as the president, I focus on the advocacy, and that is what has led to this inquiry, but

⁴⁹ Kellyanne Rosalion, *Submission 21*, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Laisarn Leong, *Submission 7*, p. 2.

⁵¹ Ms Laisarn Leong, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 15.

⁵² Ms Kellyanne Rosalion, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 2.

what I would like to see is DeafACT being the leading organisation directly engaging with the ACT government over all things deafness.⁵³

Recommendation 11

That the ACT Government provide financial assistance to DeafACT.

AUSLAN interpreters

Workforce

- 2.31. Interpreters are a crucial means for Deaf people to access information and services in Auslan. However, there is a significant shortage of interpreters in the ACT.⁵⁴ A fully-certified NAATI-qualified interpreter is able to provide services in a range of complex and specialised settings and there is only one such interpreter in the ACT who is semi-retired.⁵⁵
- 2.32. There are an additional eight NAATI Certified Provisional Interpreters in the ACT who are qualified to facilitate communication of non-complex messages in limited settings.
- 2.33. The ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service highlights the interpreter shortage issue:

There is an urgent need to increase the numbers of NAATI qualified interpreters working in the Territory, especially those working at a professional level (certified) and those who are certified specialist legal interpreters and certifies 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).⁵⁶

- 2.34. Whilst Deaf people can access video remote interpreting, this service is not always appropriate in some settings. Therefore, face-to-face interpreting should also be available where necessary.⁵⁷ The Disability Justice Liaison Officer at Legal Aid ACT related to the Committee her understanding of the importance of this:

What I have learnt from the Deaf community, though, is the importance of having an interpreter face to face and in the room and how important it is to have those discrete facial expressions and the body language, how important that is for the language.⁵⁸

⁵³ Mr Jacob Clarke, President DeafACT, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 6.

⁵⁴ Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ ASLIA, *Submission 25*, p. 3.

⁵⁶ ADACAS, *Submission 32*, p. 2. See also the 'Early Intervention' section in this report.

⁵⁷ ASLIA, *Submission 25*, p. 2; ACT Government *Submission 17*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Ms Angela Farrell, Disability Justice Liaison Officer, Legal Aid ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 36.

Training

- 2.35. The Committee learned that the cost of Auslan training, in addition to there being no local provider makes it difficult for ACT residents to study to become an Auslan interpreter.
- 2.36. Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) ended its certificate Auslan courses in 2015.⁵⁹ At that time, the-then Director of the Health, Community and Science division at CIT was reported by ABC Radio Canberra as stating that ‘industry skills councils and governments’, decide on which skills should be targeted by training packages. Auslan had been removed from the skills shortage subsidy list in the ACT. As a result, under the requirements of the Australian Skills Quality Authority, CIT was compelled to only offer Auslan to existing students so that they could complete their certificate.⁶⁰
- 2.37. The Committee noted inconsistency, throughout relevant ACT Government portfolios, in its responses to an availability of Auslan skills. This disparity could be remedied by a whole-of-government Auslan taskforce:
- In his answer to a question posed by the Committee during the Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022, the Minister for Skills stated:

Industry and community engagement, through consultation to inform the development of the ACT Skills Needs List, has not identified a shortage of Auslan interpreters.⁶¹
 - The Interim Chief Executive Officer of CIT stated during the same inquiry:

We know that there is now a high demand for Auslan qualified graduates.⁶²
 - The Minister for Disability made the following observation, during the Committee’s public hearing into access to services and information in Auslan:

There is an identified shortage of certified interpreter level 3 Auslan Interpreters within the ACT.⁶³
- 2.38. Members of both the local and national Deaf communities clearly identify Auslan interpreting as a skills shortage:

⁵⁹ Ms Sheree Murray, Board Director and ACT Representative, ASLIA, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 54.

⁶⁰ Hannah Walmsley and Genevieve Jacobs, ‘Auslan Sign language courses axed at Canberra’s CIT, despite interpreter shortage’, ABC News, 4 February 2015, [Auslan sign language courses axed at Canberra's CIT, despite interpreter shortage - ABC News](#).

⁶¹ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Question Taken on Notice no. 32, *Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022*, 7 November 2022.

⁶² Ms Christine Robertson, *Committee Hansard (Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022)*, 7 November 2022, p. 145.

⁶³ ACT Government, *Submission 17*, p. 2.

- There were 536 signatories to the ACT Legislative Assembly E-Petition that stated that the availability of services and information in Auslan in the ACT is inadequate.⁶⁴
- Deaf Connect noted in their submission that there is a shortage of Auslan interpreters in Australia.⁶⁵
- Deaf Australia observes that there has been no ‘consideration for increasing the interpreting pool in the ACT’.⁶⁶

2.39. Currently, Canberra residents can access non-accredited, recreational courses in Auslan 1 and 2 through CIT Solutions, a subsidiary of CIT. However, these courses do not attract ACT Government funding.⁶⁷ Further, one witness stated that these courses do not adequately address the interpreter workforce shortage:

The introductory courses just give a very basic starting point. To get any sort of fluency you need to have at least completed certificate II to be able to start a conversation, and probably a diploma of Auslan to have any real fluency in the language.⁶⁸

2.40. In the absence of a local provider, ACT residents can access certified Auslan training through Deaf Connect, the latter delivered by Access Training and Education, a private Registered Training Organisation that receives ACT Government funding through the Job Trainer program.⁶⁹

2.41. Despite this funding from the ACT Government, the Committee learned that the cost of these courses for ACT residents is comparatively higher than in other states.⁷⁰

The costings of our course from the beginning of the Auslan I course through to the diploma of interpreting of Auslan is \$20,540. In comparison to other states, South Australia is \$5,845, Queensland \$6,390 and New South Wales \$9,820. I believe this massive economic hindrance is a large part of the reason why we do not have enough qualified interpreters available for the Deaf community both locally and Australia wide.⁷¹

2.42. Deaf Australia suggests that the shortage of Auslan interpreters can be addressed by:

⁶⁴ Petition no 33-21, lodged by Ms Nicole Lawder MLA and received by the Assembly on 8 February 2022.

⁶⁵ Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Deaf Australia, *Submission 33*, p. 6.

⁶⁷ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Question Taken on Notice no. 33, *Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022*, 7 November 2022.

⁶⁸ Ms Sheree Murray, Board Director and ACT Representative, ASLIA, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 55.

⁶⁹ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Question Taken on Notice no. 32, *Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022*, 7 November 2022.

⁷⁰ Ms Sheree Murray, Board Director and ACT Representative, ASLIA, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 53.

⁷¹ Ms Sheree Murray, Board Director and ACT Representative, ASLIA, reading statement from Auslan student Katy Wilmington, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 52.

- promoting Auslan interpreting as a genuine career pathway in secondary education.
- providing training for specialisation in interpreting in specific settings.
- retention of the current interpreting workforce through professional development, high pay, and career flexibility.
- subsidising interpreting qualifications.
- including Auslan in the Fee-free TAFE initiative.⁷²

2.43. The Committee learned of the circumstances that hinder Auslan interpretation as a viable profession:

The interpreting industry has long been identified with poor working conditions, low incomes, job insecurity, and increased chances of developing occupational overuse syndrome. While the emergence of the NDIS has strengthened the likelihood of an increased income, and income stability, it has also meant that where interpreters are desperately needed, many experience a serious shortage of certified, appropriate, and available interpreters.⁷³

2.44. ASLIA maintain that in order for Auslan interpreting to be supported, there needs to be:

- a guarantee of regular courses.⁷⁴
- protections for the ‘highly casualised workforce’ of Auslan interpreters, including provisions for superannuation and sick leave.⁷⁵

Recommendation 12

That the ACT Government reintroduce certified Auslan courses through the Canberra Institute of Technology.

⁷² Deaf Australia, *Submission 33*, p. 6.

The 2022/23 Victorian budget included a \$103.1 million TAFE funding package with \$4.8 million allocated to Diploma-level Auslan training, added to Free TAFE ([Melbourne Polytechnic welcomes funding for free Auslan training - Melbourne Polytechnic](#)). In 2022, as part of the WA Government’s allocation of an additional \$9 million in funding to the disability sector, \$400, 000 was provided to Access Plus ‘in collaboration with the National Accreditation Authority of Translators and Interpreters, to deliver accredited Auslan training and real-life interpreting experience’ ([Media Statements - \\$9 million to attract workers and build further capacity in WA’s disability sector](#)).

⁷³ Deaf Australia, *Submission 33*, p. 6.

⁷⁴ ASLIA, *Submission 25*, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Ms Sheree Murray, Board Director and ACT Representative, ASLIA, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 57.

Recommendation 13

That the ACT Government adopt targets for higher numbers of certified Auslan-English interpreters within the ACT.

Recommendation 14

That the ACT Government implement a casual sick pay scheme that covers Auslan interpreters.

Recommendation 15

That the ACT Government provide subsidies to students of Auslan, including scholarships.

Education

- 2.45. A key factor in understanding the education of deaf and HoH children is accepting that ‘deaf children are not hearing children who can’t hear’ but ‘citizens of tomorrow with rights, privileges and responsibilities thereof’:

Whether or not they believe it (or like it), they will need to be competent, and preferably fluent, in the written (if not spoken) vernacular of their workplaces and their communities. They will need problem-solving skills that allow them to be flexible in the physical and intellectual contexts of their employment and have communication and social skills that allow them to be engaged both occupationally and socially.⁷⁶

As Margaret Tope, the Principal of the Victorian College for the Deaf summarises, ‘Read to learn. Write to learn.’⁷⁷

- 2.46. The education of deaf and HoH children may be hindered by the views and emotions of some families. A functional educational response would support parents in providing early and function language resources to these children. The National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf note:

The education of Deaf and hard-of-hearing children is a field where strong beliefs and opinions can override the educational rights of the child. Parents want their

⁷⁶ Mark Marschark and Greg Leigh, ‘Recognizing Diversity in Deaf Education: Now What Do We Do With It?!’ in Mark Marschark, Venetta Lampropoulou and Emmanouil K. Skordilis (eds.) (2016) *Diversity in Deaf Education: Perspectives in Deaf Education*, New York: Oxford University Press USA: 507-536, pp. 508- 509. The Committee met with Professor Greg Leigh AO during its site visits to schools for the deaf, *Committee Private Meeting* no. 90, 17 November 2022.

⁷⁷ *Committee Private Meeting* no. 89, 16 November 2022.

children to reflect them, and this can restrict the educational options for children. To acquire any language children must have exposure, in quality and quantity to accessible language input, from capable language users in a meaningful way.⁷⁸

- 2.47. The Committee learned of the importance of a deaf child having ‘strong foundation language’ before they start school:

Access to information, language acquisition, is incredibly important within those first seven years of life. If a child does not have access to information or to language, whether it be spoken or signed, it can have a huge negative impact on them... Communication itself starts in the home. It is not about this child attending sessions. It is about engaging with their own family members and creating a foundation language. That all happens in the home.⁷⁹

- 2.48. The Committee learned from the experience of a hearing parent of a Deaf child:

Something that is really missing in Canberra, right from that very early age, is access to early intervention playgroups and providers and preschools and day-care centres that have any access to Auslan... There is no opportunity for there to be immersive, group early intervention and education experiences for Deaf children and hearing children together, with Deaf mentors, teachers of the Deaf, qualified Auslan instructors to provide that really early access and that early tutoring in Auslan.⁸⁰

- 2.49. These observations not only have implications for education, but also for health policy, given the associated need for early diagnosis of deafness in infants. Therefore, this discussion is continued later in this report – see subheading ‘Early intervention’ in the ‘Health’ section.

Mainstreaming

- 2.50. ‘Mainstreaming’ for the purposes of this report denotes the practice of placing students with special needs into general education classroom.
- 2.51. The National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf cite research that notes that over 80 per cent of deaf and hard-of-hearing students ‘attend regular classes in mainstream schools’.⁸¹ However, the Committee surmises on the basis of evidence provided to the inquiry that this approach may not be the best fit for the majority of deaf and hard-of-hearing students.
- 2.52. Deaf education experts who spoke to the Committee during its site visits,⁸² drew attention, within the field of special education, to the confusion that surrounds an understanding of

⁷⁸ National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf, *Submission 18*, p. 3.

⁷⁹ Ms Sherrie Beaver, Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project Lead, Expression Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 59.

⁸⁰ Dr Louise Ferrer, Parent, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p.29.

⁸¹ National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf, *Submission 18*, p. 2.

⁸² *Committee Private Meetings* nos 89 and 90, 16- 17 November 2022. These experts were senior staff from Victorian College for the Deaf, Melbourne; Next Sense Institute and St Gabriel’s School, Sydney.

the notion of inclusion. This confusion may be characterised by an assumption that inclusion for deaf children denotes integration or mainstreaming.

- 2.53. The content of these conversations is paralleled in academic literature. For example, in his discussion of inclusion and deaf education, Stephen Powers notes ‘that the inclusion debate is often not really about education’. Instead, it is often a reflection of wider political concerns concerning desegregation and antidiscrimination in the absence of any consideration or evidence of educational achievement.⁸³

Experience of mainstreaming

- 2.54. The Committee learned about the childhood experiences of Deaf Canberrans in local schools, often characterised by isolation. Ms Leong provided insights to the Committee on her experiences:

I was mainstreamed through my education and it was very, very difficult...I was bullied because I was different. I was the only Deaf person in a hearing school...

I am very jealous of those Deaf people who went to a deaf school where they were other Deaf people because they had Deaf friends. They were able to communicate with each other. I am very jealous because I missed out on all that.⁸⁴

I was taught to speak and listen and then, further on, throughout my education experience I was mainstreamed and I was on my own in that school setting without any support. I did not meet another Deaf person until my late 20s, which is when I learned Auslan and I learned to sign. That was the first time in my life where I had full access and I understood everything—in my late 20s. That was a life-changing moment for me because I finally had access to everything. With the oral method of communication, there were so many inconsistencies for me and I was missing a lot. It was draining; it was exhausting.⁸⁵

- 2.55. Amanda Dolejsi, a Certified Auslan/English interpreter, and active member of ACT’s Deaf community explained, that the mainstreaming of deaf and hard-of-hearing children in ACT schools can be isolating and traumatic.⁸⁶ The notion of ‘mainstreaming’ in this context refers to a sole deaf child being isolated in a standard classroom with hearing peers.

Mainstreaming does not work for our children. Isolating them from their peers is not acceptable for Deaf or HoH children....The education policy of mainstreaming Deaf and HoH children forces them into an isolated educational experience. These children are usually the only Deaf or HoH child in a school where Auslan is not

⁸³ Stephen Powers, ‘From Concepts to Practice in Deaf Education: a United Kingdom Perspective on Inclusion’ in *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 7 (3) July 2002: 230–243, p. 232. Stephen Powers defines good practice in inclusion for deaf students on pages 237–241 of this article.

⁸⁴ Bradley Jones, *Submission 1*.

⁸⁵ Ms Laisarn Leong, Teacher of the Deaf, ACT Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 12.

⁸⁶ Amanda Dolejsi, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

taught as a LOTE and teachers and support staff have little if any specialised training in having a Deaf or HoH child in their classroom.

The child may get the services of a visiting Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) for a few hours per week but other than that the child is left to manage on their own. They do not have regular contact with other Deaf or HoH children to develop appropriate peer relationships and many go through school having no real friendship group. They are often bullied and alone most of the time. This does not bode well for their developing personalities, and I have a genuine fear for their future mental health.⁸⁷

- 2.56. Deaf Australia acknowledges that the provision of sign language interpreters is an important education option but ‘does not replace direct instruction in sign language or a fully accessible sign language environment’.⁸⁸
- 2.57. The President of DeafACT⁸⁹ advocates for a centralised education for Deaf school students instead of their being ‘segregated, isolated and mainstreamed at individual schools.’⁹⁰

If we were to have a dedicated school for Deaf students, you can imagine the thriving, the education, the access to language—to access their first language through education. If we did have that, we could have a Deaf unit, we could have the interpreters funded, and there would be great social and emotional wellbeing improvements for the Deaf community. I think that is what would come from a dedicated Deaf school or Deaf unit.

- 2.58. However, the Committee notes that not all parents of deaf children choose a dedicated Deaf school for their children. In addition, deaf and HoH children may attend a Deaf unit within a mainstream school. Nevertheless, the Committee was presented with extensive evidence in favour of deaf children being provided with the opportunity to interact with each other in a school setting.⁹¹ For example, a Canberra deaf parent of a deaf child wrote:

If we were still living in Melbourne, we would have chosen for our daughter to attend a mainstream school with a Deaf Facility onsite. With this set up, she would be in a mainstream class, with other deaf students, with continual support from a Teacher of the Deaf (in the classroom and for individual specialised support) and also with possible access to educational Auslan interpreters and Auslan as a LOTE subject.⁹²

- 2.59. This mode of mainstreaming Deaf students through isolation in a hearing classroom, does not only have implications for mental and emotional health but also for educational outcomes:

⁸⁷ Amanda Dolejsi, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Deaf Australia, *Submission 33*, p. 6.

⁸⁹ DeafACT is a not-for-profit organisation that was established in 2010 and supports advocacy, sports and recreation for the Deaf community in the Act and surrounding NSW areas.

⁹⁰ Jacob Clarke, *Submission 3*.

⁹¹ as cited throughout this section of the report.

⁹² Kellyanne Rosalion, *Submission 21*, p. 2.

Segregation does not work for Deaf children, Deaf adults. They need other people to communicate with who communicate in their own language. I know there has been quite a push from other disability advocacy organisations to mainstream people with a disability. It just does not work with our Deaf kids. Our Deaf kids need other Deaf kids. They need access to language for their own mental health, for their own education. ... our Deaf kids are not achieving their full potential by any stretch of the imagination. Not many of them are going to university.⁹³

Auslan in mainstream schools

- 2.60. The Committee noted the introduction, in 2017, of Auslan as a language other than English in the Australian curriculum, a subject which is deemed beneficial for hearing and Deaf staff and students. The visual modality of Auslan, ‘reinforces the development of neural pathways and cognitive processes’. It also emphasises and improves the understanding of and associated skills in relation to ‘visual-gestural communication’.⁹⁴
- 2.61. The inclusion of Auslan in mainstream schools is exemplified by the curriculum policy at Toowong State School in Brisbane, Queensland – a bilingual, bicultural, primary school in which all students are taught Auslan and have the opportunity to join the school’s signing choir.⁹⁵

Policy implications

- 2.62. Given the evidence presented to the Committee as well as the advocacy from the wider disability rights movement, the Committee understands why Deaf communities have advocated for the provision of sign bilingual education for Deaf children.⁹⁶ The Committee is also aware of the complexity of factors that contribute to the academic performance of deaf and HoH children in addition to social and cultural considerations. As part of its site visits, the Committee observed both bilingual (English and Auslan) and spoken language classrooms for deaf and HoH children, the latter supported by the success of cochlear implants for some children. The Committee also observed a kindergarten classroom comprised of hearing and deaf children which supported the use of both spoken language and Auslan.⁹⁷

⁹³ Amanda Dolejsi, Auslan Interpreter, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p.25.

⁹⁴ Estelle Borrey, ‘Why Teach Auslan in Australian Schools’, 26 May 2018, *Educational Infrastructure Services Australia*, <https://www.eisau.com.au/blog/why-teach-auslan-in-australian-schools/>

⁹⁵ The Committee is grateful to Ms Margaret Tope, the Principal of the Victorian School for the Deaf for this observation (*Committee Private Meeting* no. 89, 16 November 2022). Further information at: Toowong State School, ‘Bilingual Bicultural’, 17 February 2020, [Bilingual Bicultural \(eq.edu.au\)](https://www.eq.edu.au/bilingual-bicultural/)

⁹⁶ In addition to the advocacy of the inclusion of sign language in school curricula included in submissions to this inquiry from members of the Deaf community in the ACT (for example, Bradley Jones, *Submission 1*; Amanda Dolejsi, *Submission 8*, Lewis Ophel, *Submission 26*), the British Deaf Association also advocates for a sign bilingual education for ‘the majority of deaf children’ - Stephen Powers, ‘From Concepts to Practice in Deaf Education: a United Kingdom Perspective on Inclusion’ in *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 7 (3) July 2002: 230–243, p. 233).

⁹⁷ *Committee Private Meetings* nos. 92 and 93, 18 November 2022.

- 2.63. The Committee, through its site visits to two public schools in Canberra, observed mainstreaming, whereby an individual deaf or hard-of-hearing child, is supported by an interpreter in a general education classroom.⁹⁸
- 2.64. The Committee acknowledges the complexity of learning needs of deaf and HoH students and that one model of deaf education may not fit all. The Committee also understands that this density is intensified by the dearth of certified deaf teachers.
- 2.65. With regard to ACT public schools, the Committee understands and appreciates staff's demonstrated, caring commitment to the well-being of their students and the resourcing challenges in fulfilling the needs of a small cohort within a relatively small, wider population in the ACT. Nevertheless, it is justifiable, on the basis on the evidence presented, that the Committee concludes that the current, singular government policy of providing interpretation to an individual deaf or HoH child in a mainstream classroom is unlikely to address the variations in social, mental health and learning needs for all in this cohort.
- 2.66. The Committee commends to the ACT Government, the following list, provided by ASLIA, of minimal proficiencies required for educational interpreters:
- extremely fluent in both Auslan and spoken (and written) English.
 - proficient in the skills involved in interpreting between the two languages.
 - able to demonstrate a good understanding of pedagogical theory and practice, including education of the deaf.
 - able to demonstrate a good understanding of, and respect for, both Deaf and mainstream cultures (including the history of Deaf education, oppression of Deaf culture and the concept of hearing privilege).
 - able to demonstrate knowledge of child and language development.
 - able to demonstrate knowledge of the specific subject areas being taught.
 - a good team worker.
 - aware of the "illusion of inclusion" that can occur during mediated learning and strategies to mitigate.
 - and possess a strong sense of professional ethics and boundaries.⁹⁹
- 2.67. Deaf education practitioner and scholar Dr Breda Carty AO identifies, in the ACT, a 'lack of consistent high-quality service provision in Auslan' as 'most pronounced in the education sector', evident in:
- mainstreaming of deaf students.

⁹⁸ *Committee Private Meetings nos. 92 and 93*, 18 November 2022.

⁹⁹ ASLIA (2018) *Educational Interpreting Policy* [Educational-Interpreting-Policy-2018.pdf \(aslia.com.au\)](https://aslia.com.au/Educational-Interpreting-Policy-2018.pdf) pp. 5-6.

- the absence of bilingual programs (English and Auslan) at all levels of education.
- very few teachers and support staff who are fluent in Auslan.¹⁰⁰

2.68. It is not the role of the Committee to present a fluent summary of the complexity of pedagogies that may inform a rich education for ACT deaf children and adolescents. Nevertheless, the evidence presented to this inquiry leads the Committee to conclude that an Auslan taskforce in the ACT (see Recommendation 1) should, as part of its overall agenda, pay rigorous (evidence-based) and critical attention to the needs of deaf learners. Professor Greg Leigh AO suggested to the Committee that education policy makers should consider the following:

... because of the diversity among the small community of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners, there is a wide range of potential responses that might be required to accommodate both the curriculum and social needs of any individual student within that community. Policy makers need to ask *not* 'what is the best approach for the community as a whole', but rather should be prepared to ask the question 'what are the curriculum and/or social inclusion responses that are necessary to accommodate the needs of the individuals or specific groups of learners within that community?'.¹⁰¹

Therefore:

The point is that we have to ask the right questions ... and then live with—and make appropriate use of—the answers.¹⁰²

2.69. The Committee provides the following recommendations to a prospective Auslan taskforce to initiate a re-examination of deaf education in the ACT.

Recommendation 16

That the ACT Government establish a dedicated facility for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students in a mainstream school.

Recommendation 17

That the ACT Government liaise with relevant organisations in order to establish dedicated, formal and frequent learning and social networks for Deaf school students throughout the ACT and Australia.

¹⁰⁰ Dr Breda Carty AO, *Submission 27*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰¹ Professor Greg Leigh AO, Director of Next Sense Institute, *Committee Private Meeting*, no. 90, 17 November 2022.

¹⁰² Mark Marschark and Greg Leigh, 'Recognizing Diversity in Deaf Education: Now What Do We Do With It?!' in Mark Marschark, Venetta Lampropoulou and Emmanouil K. Skordilis (eds.) (2016) *Diversity in Deaf Education: Perspectives in Deaf Education*, 507-535 (New York: Oxford University Press USA), p. 528.

Recommendation 18

That the ACT Government investigate the current delivery status of the subject of Auslan (LOTE, Australian Curriculum, F-10) in ACT schools with the view to increasing the offering of this subject throughout a range of year levels and schools.

Justice

- 2.70. Paragraph 2.8 of this report draws attention to Australia's ratification of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Article 13 of the Convention states that 'State Parties shall ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations, in order to facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect participants, including as witnesses, in all legal proceedings, including at investigative and other preliminary stages'. Article 21 of the Convention addresses the right of people with disabilities to 'receive and impart information ..through all forms of communication of their choice', including 'recognising and promoting the use of sign languages'.¹⁰³
- 2.71. The Committee's observations below, relevant to a range of organisations within the justice sector, pertain to all deaf and hard-of-hearing people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, given that '43 per cent of Aboriginal people aged seven years and over had a hearing impairment'.¹⁰⁴

ACT Courts and Tribunal

- 2.72. The Principal Registrar and CEO of ACT Courts and Tribunal stated that an increase in the availability of Auslan interpreters would be welcomed. It is not appropriate for Deaf people to rely on family and friends to interpret court proceedings due to the level of fluency required in both English and Auslan. In addition, lengthy court proceedings require more than one interpreter to ensure regular breaks.¹⁰⁵
- 2.73. The need for Auslan interpretation is not confined to court proceedings but also in relation to preceding information:

For example, in the event that the person before the court was unable to understand the requirement to attend court and the conditions of a court order, they could unknowingly breach them, and then the matter could potentially become more serious.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ as cited by the Australian Lawyers Alliance, *Submission 31*, pp. 8-9 and Deaf Connect, *Submission 21*, pp. 16 and 19

¹⁰⁴ Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited, *Submission 29*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ ACT Courts and Tribunal, *Submission 10*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ ACT Courts and Tribunal, *Submission 10*, p. 2.

2.74. For court users from a different cultural background, who may not be fluent in Auslan, a Deaf interpreter who is able to communicate via pictographs may also be required.¹⁰⁷

2.75. The Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) asserts that:

ensuring there are adequate services and information in Auslan is critical to upholding the rule of law and the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with hearing impairments.¹⁰⁸

2.76. The CEO of Legal Aid ACT stated that the Interpreter Protocols issued by ACT Courts and Tribunal are 'good'.¹⁰⁹ However, the case studies provided by Legal Aid ACT in its submission demonstrate the complications and delays in the provision of Auslan interpreters in court as well as confusion regarding court payment for services. For example:

A Deaf client required legal representation for a hearing. The client and the court staff were unable to find a certified (Level 3) Auslan interpreter either in person or via video conference call.

The client wanted to arrange an interstate interpreter chosen by them. However, it is unclear whether the court would pay the relevant fees and travel costs if the client did arrange the interpreter, and the client could not bear the risk of having to pay the costs themselves. This process caused the client a significant amount of stress.

Our lawyer sought an adjournment on the day of the hearing. The client was still required to attend the hearing in person, without an interpreter. After the hearing the client expressed frustration at not being able to communicate or participate in the hearing.¹¹⁰

2.77. Given that Australia is a signatory to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, the Committee urges ACT Courts and Tribunal to fulfill its obligations under Article 13 by supporting the civic rights of deaf people through their participation in the jury system by not excluding Auslan users from jury duty.

2.78. The Committee learned of the importance of courts notifying correction centres, through formal documentation, when they will be receiving a deaf inmate.¹¹¹

Recommendation 19

That ACT Courts update their practices for interpreting and associated communication throughout the judiciary and court staff in order to ensure that the courts are aware of their obligations for provision of services, including Auslan.

¹⁰⁷ ACT Courts and Tribunal, *Submission 10*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited, *Submission 29*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Dr John Boersig, CEO of Legal Aid ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 38.

¹¹⁰ Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited, *Submission 29*, p. 3.

¹¹¹ Deaf Connect, *Submission 21*, p. 19.

ACT Policing

2.79. Policing practices may not consider the needs of Deaf people. For example:

being stopped in a traffic check and the need to pick up your phone to get an interpreter or to tell the officer that they are Deaf. You are not allowed to touch your phone when you have been stopped, so that is just a very practical implication.¹¹²

2.80. The Committee thus understands the need for interpreters in a range of settings and situations ‘not only when [deaf people] ...are the accused or being charged’.¹¹³

Recommendation 20

That the ACT Government provide mandatory training to ACT Policing on Deaf awareness and booking interpreting services.

Access in prison

2.81. In addition to the need for accessible emergency services in prison (see Recommendation 21), the Committee learned that access to services and additional information for deaf and hard-of-hearing people in prison is usually ‘extremely poor’, exemplified by the absence of:

- batteries for hearing aids.
- captioned television.
- interpreters when accessing appointments with health and/or parole staff.
- interpreters to support participation in rehabilitation programs.
- access to phone calls.¹¹⁴

Recommendation 21

That the ACT Government ensure culturally-appropriate prison services for Deaf and hard-of-hearing inmates.

Health Services

2.82. Research undertaken by Women’s Health Matters in 2021 revealed that ACT women with disabilities found it difficult to access health information. Cited obstacles included

¹¹² Ms Angela Farrell, Disability Justice Liaison Officer, Legal Aid ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 38.

¹¹³ Deaf Connect, *Submission 21*, p. 20.

¹¹⁴ Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, pp. 18-19.

affordability as well as information not provided in a range of formats such as braille and Auslan.¹¹⁵

- 2.83. Deaf participants in the Committee's inquiry related obstacles to accessing medical appointments and diagnoses.¹¹⁶ One submitter was refused an interpreter during a weekend visit to a walk-in clinic in Canberra. He noted that it can be embarrassing for Deaf people to have to rely on loved ones to interpret personal medical information. Further, such interpretation requires the skills of a professional interpreter given the complex, medical information that is presented in a medical appointment.¹¹⁷
- 2.84. These obstacles are also evident for Deaf people who care for a hearing adult parent. One submitter attends to hospital appointments with her father who has cancer:

On arrival the nurse directed us to a room and told to sit down at a phone table. I said, 'I'm deaf'. The nurse shrugged in reply. I was stumped and started to panic trying to work out what to do. I thought about asking a nearby hearing person to help me out. I couldn't ask a nearby person as they were likely to be cancer patients or were with cancer patients. Then I thought maybe asking the nurse? I really needed to be involved in this appointment to support my father who has cancer. I found this a struggling experience.¹¹⁸

It was already clear from this that there needs to be a system. They knew that I was deaf and needed interpreting access, but I am still running into barriers.

- 2.85. Deaf patients, in waiting rooms, can also miss out on their medical appointments when surgery staff call out names in the absence of a visual prompt system.¹¹⁹
- 2.86. One submitter substantiated her view that there is no effective process, at the emergency departments of Canberra and Calvary Hospitals, for the provision of Auslan interpreters for Deaf people. She exemplified the reasons given by hospital staff:
- request cannot be fulfilled outside of office hours
 - no payment code available for this service
 - no contact information for Auslan service.¹²⁰
- 2.87. The Committee learned that online and on-demand interpreting services have been provided, since September 2021, by Convo Australia¹²¹, which also complements the National Relay Service by providing additional interpreting services.¹²²

¹¹⁵ Women's Health Matters, *Submission 23*, pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁶ Bradley Jones, *Submission 1*; Laisarn Leong, *Submission 7*, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ Bradley Jones, *Submission 1*.

¹¹⁸ Laisarn Leong, *Submission 7*, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ Bradley Jones, *Submission 1*.

¹²⁰ Amanda Dolejsi, *Submission 8*, p.4.

¹²¹ Convo Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 1.

¹²² Mr Todd Wright, Director of Business Development of Convo Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 70. The National Relay Service is provided by the Australian Government to assist deaf or HoH people communicate with a hearing person via telephone.

- 2.88. The Committee is aware that the ACT Government has existing policies and information about interpreting services that include the provision of Auslan. However, this inquiry revealed that the lived experience ‘on the ground’ demonstrates that staff on frontline health services may neither use the Auslan interpreting services that are available, nor heed current ACT interpreting policy. The Committee thus concludes that an extra policy step is required the bridge this gap in ensuring that the messaging of policy documents is understood by relevant ACT Government employees.

Early intervention

- 2.89. The Committee learned of the importance of parents receiving timely and inclusive information from health professionals if they receive the diagnosis that their newborn is deaf.
- 2.90. A Canberran hearing parent, whose Deaf child benefitted from early intervention to assist with his development of spoken language, expressed her concern at the lack of access to Auslan. She stated that a sole emphasis on cochlear implants will not support her Deaf son when he does not have access to these devices.¹²³ Moreover, a focus on spoken language neither supports bilingualism (English and Auslan) nor social connections with the Deaf community.

Our son, Milo, who is now three, was diagnosed with profound deafness when he was five weeks old. He is the first Deaf person that we have ever met and known.... There was just an assumption that, as a hearing family, we would not want to go down a pathway of learning Auslan, that we would actually be focusing on spoken language and that would be where we would go with Milo. And so, as a family, we had to connect ourselves.¹²⁴

- 2.91. Studies reveal the importance of:
- diagnosis of hearing loss in newborns.
 - early intervention services for families of Deaf and hard-of-hearing infants, in order to ensure ‘language, speech and social-emotional development’.¹²⁵

Research indicates that ‘deaf children who learn sign language from a young age also go through the same stages of language development as hearing children’.¹²⁶

- 2.92. Another Canberra parent of a deaf child echoed this need for early access:

¹²³ Lou Farrer, *Submission 16*, p.1

¹²⁴ Dr Louise Farrer, Parent, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 28.

¹²⁵ Christine Yoshinaga-Itano ‘From Screening to Early Identification and Intervention: Discovering Predictors to Successful Outcomes for Children with Significant Hearing Loss’ in *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 8 (1), January 2003: 11–30, p. 26; Mark Marschark and Greg Leigh, ‘Recognizing Diversity in Deaf Education: Now What Do We Do With It?!’ in Mark Marschark, Venetta Lampropoulou and Emmanouil K. Skordilis (eds.) (2016) *Diversity in Deaf Education: Perspectives in Deaf Education* (New York: Oxford University Press USA): 507-536, p. 514.

¹²⁶ Sarah Tashjian, ‘Language Development in Deaf Children: What You Should Know’, 1 May 2018, *Psychology in Action*, <https://www.psychologyinaction.org/psychology-in-action-1/2018/4/28/language-development-in-deaf-children-what-you-should-know>

There is a need for services that allow families to access Auslan as soon as they become aware of their child's hearing loss... It is becoming increasingly clear that families are struggling to find services to support them with Auslan when they discover their child is deaf. The early intervention services are great in their areas of expertise, but sadly they do not really recognise or understand how vital Auslan is to deaf babies and children.¹²⁷

- 2.93. The Committee learned, from speaking with deaf education experts as part of their site visits, of the importance for deaf children in acquiring age-appropriate language and not to be left behind, because as language development underpins cognitive, social and literacy development. As Margaret Tope stated, 'The brain just wants language'.¹²⁸
- 2.94. Given that 95 per cent of deaf and hard-of-hearing children¹²⁹ are born to hearing parents, there is a need for targeted intervention services for parents. These may comprise:
- teaching and counselling strategies that assist families in bonding with their deaf infant;
 - communication methods (sign language and/or speech production);
 - understanding how to support the social-emotional development of their child; and,
 - the resolution of family grief following the diagnosis of hearing loss.¹³⁰
- 2.95. Deaf Connect emphasises the importance for parents of deaf children, upon diagnosis to be provided with:
- 'auditory verbal and sign visual information' and for these pathways to be 'equally non-biased' and not be framed as an 'either or' or as a 'final option'.
 - opportunities to meet parents of Deaf children and members of the Deaf community.¹³¹
- 2.96. One parent noted the struggle she faced in negotiating with the NDIS for support for a family Auslan tutor:

We had to advocate quite strongly, within Milo's NDIS support, for funding to support us to get an Auslan tutor to come to our home. We currently have Auslan in the home, but we have had to really strongly push for that. I think there was a belief within Milo's NDIS support that he has cochlear implants, he is accessing speech therapy, and so it is one or the other... But he is Deaf and he will always be

¹²⁷ Kellyanne Rosalion, *Submission 21*, p. 3.

¹²⁸ Ms Margaret Tope, Principal, Victorian College for the Deaf, *Committee Private Meeting* no. 89, 16 November 2022.

¹²⁹ Mark Marschark and Greg Leigh, 'Recognizing Diversity in Deaf Education: Now What Do We Do With It?!' in Mark Marschark, Venetta Lampropoulou and Emmanouil K. Skordilis (eds.) (2016) *Diversity in Deaf Education: Perspectives in Deaf Education* (New York: Oxford University Press USA): 507-536, p. 514.

¹³⁰ Christine Yoshinaga-Itano 'From Screening to Early Identification and Intervention:' Discovering Predictors to Successful Outcomes for Children with Significant Hearing Loss' in *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 8 (1), January 2003: 11-30, pp. 13, 26-27.

¹³¹ Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, p. 6.

Deaf. So it is really important for us to have both of those ways to be able to communicate with him.¹³²

Recommendation 22

That Canberra Health Services provide Deaf awareness training and equipment/resources to hospital staff, which include:

- the right to an interpreter in emergency departments and during mental health emergencies
- the communication needs of Deaf patients.
- access to face-to-face and on-call telephone and remote Auslan interpreting services
- information about Auslan to families, immediately after newborn hearing screening.

Recommendation 23

That the ACT Government liaise with the NDIS to encourage the scheme to fund Auslan courses for families of Deaf children.

Aged Care

- 2.97. The Committee learned that Deaf seniors in Canberra are frightened by the prospect of isolation in aged care facilities in the ACT that do not cater to the communication needs of Deaf residents.¹³³ One submitter who is Deaf is concerned about the lack of support for her Deaf husband who has dementia. She also needs support to care for him. She can access My Aged Care in Sydney via Deaf Connect. However:

There's nothing close by. All their support workers are hearing, here in Canberra. The woman who is supporting me in Sydney does sign and she is very good. But I am really not sure. I do not feel like I can rely on her, being in Sydney. I would really like support close at hand.¹³⁴

- 2.98. The Committee learned about Deaf seniors' fear of isolation in aged care facilities with no access to Auslan:

¹³² Dr Louise Farrer, Parent, *Committee Hansard*, 25 October 2022, p. 31.

¹³³ Amanda Dolejsi, *Submission 8*, p. 1.

¹³⁴ Anne Madden, *Submission 2*.

While some Deaf people do use lipreading skills to assist them in communication they have learned to lipread an English speaker with an Australian accent. Second language English speakers have an ‘accent’ which is very difficult to lipread.¹³⁵

- 2.99. The ACT Government is currently developing its ten-year *ACT Disability Strategy* which is informed by a consultation process with members of the Deaf community. This process noted:

a fear of isolation in aged care settings, noting that lip reading spoken English from carers/ support workers who have English as third or fourth language is very difficult.¹³⁶

- 2.100. Isolation of Deaf elderly people through lack of access to Auslan and lack of contact with Deaf peers a community renders has a significant negative impact.¹³⁷ The suggested solution is a dedicated Deaf aged care facility where Deaf elderly people can reside with each other and is staffed by people trained in the language and culture of Deaf residents. Such a facility should employ Deaf people to engage with Deaf residents. A facility of this kind need not be a separate aged-care home but instead, form part of an existing aged-care residence.¹³⁸

- 2.101. The Royal Commission into Aged Care resulted in the Australian Government providing free Auslan interpreting to Deaf people aged over 65. However, this initiative does not extend to the provision of assistive technology for Deaf people, such as alarms¹³⁹ or Auslan interpretation through digital media such as the Convo Australia application.

Recommendation 24

That the ACT Government provide appropriate aged care facilities in the ACT to accommodate deaf Canberrans.

Recommendation 25

That the ACT Government fund access to support technology for ACT Deaf residents, aged over 65.

¹³⁵ Amanda Dolejsi, *Submission 8*, p. 1.

¹³⁶ ACT Government, *Submission 17*, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Deaf Australia, *Submission 33*, p. 7; Deaf Connect *Submission 24*, p. 20; ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service Inc., *Submission 32*, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Amanda Dolejsi, *Submission 8*, p. 1; ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service Inc., *Submission 32*, p. 3.

¹³⁹ Deaf Connect, *Submission 24*, p. 20; Mr Todd Wright, Director of Business Development, Convo Australia, Committee Hansard, 25 October 2022, p. 70.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. The Committee has learned, through the evidence presented to this Inquiry, that access to services and information in Auslan in the ACT is not at the level required to ensure the wellbeing and full participation of Deaf, Deafblind and hard-of-hearing people in areas pertaining to leisure, justice, health, education and employment.
- 3.2. The costs associated with remedying the above may be deemed challenging given the relatively smaller population in the ACT, compared with other jurisdictions in Australia, and the associated size of ACT's Deaf community.
- 3.3. However, it is the Committee's view that an economic discourse predicated solely on the notion of supply and demand does not provide a helpful lens through which to inform policies that impact ACT's Deaf community. Instead, the Committee encourages the ACT Government to apply a broader approach that demonstrates cognisance of the cost to the ACT of miscalculating both the potential and tangible value of Deaf adults and children and their shared culture.
- 3.4. In keeping with Australia's endorsement of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the *Human Rights Act 2004*, the Committee encourages the ACT Government to also adopt a civil rights' view of the provision of access to services and information in Auslan.
- 3.5. As our nation crucially addresses the threat to Indigenous languages, the Committee implores the ACT Government to pay necessary attention, too, to the role of Auslan for the Deaf community across generations and all sectors, and indeed as part of Australia's living, cultural heritage.
- 3.6. The Committee makes 25 recommendations.
- 3.7. The Committee understand that the nationwide shortage of Auslan interpreters will render these recommendations a challenging task for the ACT Government. However, this predicament denotes the leaping point for committed change and strategic policy leadership.
- 3.8. The Committee would like to thank everyone who contributed to this inquiry, including all witnesses who appeared at the hearing, those who made a written submission and those who so generously hosted the Committee's visits to their schools.
- 3.9. As Professor Greg Leigh AO, Director of Next Sense Institute, explained, a model of inclusivity is enlightened by an understanding that a particular group may be 'small in numbers but deep by impact'.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Professor Greg Leigh AO, Director of Next Sense Institute, *Committee Private Meeting* no. 90, 17 November 2022.

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA
Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion
February 2023

Appendix A: Submissions

No.	Submission by	Received	Published
1	Bradley Jones	15/06/22	21/06/22
2	Anne Madden	15/06/22	21/06/22
3	Jacob Clarke	12/07/22	19/07/22
4	Belinda Dawson	15/06/22	19/07/22
5	Greg Ophel	15/06/22	19/07/22
6	Confidential	7/07/22	19/07/22
7	Laisarn Leong	7/07/22	19/07/22
8	Amanda Dolejsi	3/07/22	19/07/22
9	Name withheld from publishing	12/07/22	19/07/22
10	ACT Courts and Tribunal	13/07/22	19/07/22
11	Name withheld from publishing	14/07/22	19/07/22
12	Convo Australia	14/07/22	19/07/22
13	ACTCOSS	14/07/22	13/09/22
14	Confidential	15/07/22	13/09/22
15	Expression Australia	15/07/22	13/09/22
16	Lou Farrer	15/07/22	13/09/22
17	Minister Davidson	15/07/22	13/09/22
18	National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf	15/07/22	13/09/22
19	Name withheld from publishing	15/07/22	13/09/22
20	Confidential	17/07/22	13/09/22
21	Kellyanne Rosalion	15/07/22	13/09/22
22	Name withheld (PARTIALLY CONFIDENTIAL)	15/07/22	13/09/22
23	Women's Health Matters	15/07/22	13/09/22
24	Deaf Connect	18/07/22	13/09/22
25	Australian Sign Language Interpreters' Association (ASLIA)	15/07/22	13/09/22
26	Name withheld from publishing	15/07/22	13/09/22
27	Dr Breda Carty AO	19/07/22	13/09/22
28	Advocacy for Inclusion	21/07/22	13/09/22
29	Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)	22/07/22	13/09/22
30	Legal Aid ACT	26/07/22	13/09/22
31	Australian Lawyers Alliance	28/07/22	24/07/22

32	ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS)	27/07/22	13/09/22
33	Deaf Australia	15/07/22	25/11/22

Appendix B: Witnesses

Tuesday, 25 October 2022

- **Dr Louise Farrer**, Parent
- **Ms Amanda Beth Dolejsi**, Auslan Interpreter
- **Ms Laisarn Leong**, Teacher of the Deaf
- **Ms Kellyanne Rosalion**, Parent

DeafACT

- **Mr Jacob Clarke**, President



Legal Aid ACT

- **Dr John Boersig**, Chief Executive Officer
- **Ms Angela Farrell**, Disability Justice Liaison Officer, Legal Aid ACT

Deafblind Australia

- **Mr Ben McAtamney**, National Advocacy Officer

Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA)

- **Ms Sheree Murray**, Board Director and ACT Representative

Deaf Connect

- **Mr Brent Phillips**, Chief Impact Officer

Expression Australia

- **Ms Sherrie Beaver**, Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project Lead

ACT Government

- **Ms Emma Davidson**, Minister for Disability,
- **Ms Ellen Dunne**, Executive Branch Manager, Communities, Community Services Directorate

National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf (NAATD)

- **Dr Kaye Scott**, Chairperson

Convo Australia

- **Mr Todd Wright**, Director of Business Development

Appendix C: Questions on notice and taken on notice

Questions on notice

No.	Date	Witness	Subject	Response received
1	25/10/22	Minister Davidson	ACT Disability Strategy	9/11/22