Deaf Australia

Getting it Right

ROADMAP TO 2025

Acknowledgment of First Peoples of Australia

Deaf Australia acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our organisation is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. Deaf Australia is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Acknowledgment of Deaf People and the Community

We acknowledge and respect the members of the deaf community in Australia, who preserve their rich heritage, culture and our language; Auslan (Australian Sign Language). We also acknowledge our custodians of Auslan, promoting awareness, equality and access through our sign language. Through Auslan, we inspire future leaders in our deaf community to continue our legacy and heritage.

Introduction

Deaf Australia was founded in 1986 as the national Deaf-led peak body representing Deaf[1] people who use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) as their primary or preferred language. Throughout its history, Deaf Australia has undertaken significant activity to improve the lives of deaf people through education, employment, health, communication, technologies, community, and more. This broad-scoped role has focussed on two specific areas: access to information and accessible communication.

Often the most marginalised group in the disability sphere, the deaf community is frequently portrayed negatively as unintelligent or uninformed. This is attributed to communication difficulties and lack of understanding. Many members of the deaf community, however, are highly intelligent and resilient and active in their respective communities.

The deaf community, as a whole, is a diverse and truly multicultural group. Among them are people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, LGBTIQA+, children and young people, and people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness – making the deaf communities unique in their own right.

It is a fundamental right for deaf people to have access to sign language. A right which is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This means that Auslan is recognised as a language alongside 'spoken' and 'other form of non-spoken languages', (Article 2) covering areas such as Accessibility (Article 9), Freedom of Expression and Opinions, and Access to Information (Article 21), Education (Article 24), and Participation in Cultural Life, Recreation, Leisure and Sport (Article 30). In addition, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (United Nations, 2007) states that "Indigenous people have the right to revitalise, use, develop and transmit to future generations" their histories and languages (including Sign Languages) (Article 13).

Deaf Australia acknowledges that there are a number of natural sign languages in use in Australia – for example among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – and that there are common issues and concerns about their use and the right to use these languages in their communities. Deaf Australia will work alongside these communities to ensure these languages are preserved, protected and the right to use these languages are maintained.

Deaf Australia will undertake activities that will promote greater recognition of and access to Auslan supported programs to ensure that deaf people can access information in a natural environment.

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[1]Deaf (with a capital 'D') is used to describe people who use Auslan to communicate and identify themselves as member of the signing Deaf community. These people may also identify themselves as 'Culturally Deaf'. They are more likely to have been born deaf or become deaf early in life, are pre-lingually deaf and use sign language as a primary or preferred language. Deaf (with lowercase 'd') is a general term used to describe people who have a physical condition of hearing loss of varying degree irrespective of which communication mode they use such as Auslan and lip reading for example. (Deaf Australia, Terminology Policy, 2010).

'Getting it Right'

'Getting it Right' is the title given to the national strategy for Deaf Australia over the next 5 years that will focus on four key priorities:

1. Auslan and Indigenous Sign Languages – their recognition and promotion,

2. Strengthening the Voice of Deaf Australians,

3. Enhancing providers' capacity to service the deaf communities, and

4. Increasing the capacity of the organisation to achieve these priorities.

The aims of 'Getting it Right' are:

- for deaf people to be able to enjoy being fully engaged citizens of Australia without prejudice, discrimination or restriction; and

- ensuring that every deaf individual has the right to express, learn, contribute and to participate at every opportunity.

Each priority in the strategy outlines objectives which Deaf Australia will work towards in tangible action through collaboration with members of the deaf communities, parents of deaf children, service providers, organisations and government and non-government agencies. The ultimate goal is the realisation of **Deaf Australia's Vision:**

Deaf people as fully engaged citizens.

To achieve this vision,
it has become Deaf Australia's mission to:

Work towards realisation of deaf person's linguistic and human rights in partnership with Australian Governments, national organisations, providers and relevant stakeholders.

Our Beliefs

EQUALITY and DIVERSITY	We are committed to promoting equality in our work. All individuals are to be treated equally and be included in our work regardless of their religion, race, gender, identity, sexual orientation, education, language, culture, age or disability.
RESPECT and EMPOWERMENT	We will consult and work collaboratively with our members, partners and donors in achieving our goals.
SIGN LANGUAGE and COMMUNITY	Language rights are essential for deaf people's human rights; thus, sign language and deaf communities must be legally recognised and promoted.
LEADERSHIP of DEAF PEOPLE	Deaf organisations must be led by deaf people and decisions which affect deaf people need to be made by deaf people.

Our Guiding Principles

HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH	The principles and objectives of the United Nations (UN) Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other general acts and recommendations of the UN and the Australian Governments will guide Deaf Australia's work. Deaf Australia operates in line with the philosophy of "Leave No One Behind", meaning equalisation of opportunities and full participation in society for deaf people in the country.
RESPECT FOR LINGUSTIC DIVERSITY	Deaf Australia works on ongoing basis for the recognition of sign languages as part of linguistic diversity and aims to improve the status of Australian sign languages.
INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE SOCIETY	Deaf Australia believes no deaf person should be denied quality education in their use of Auslan and that parents and providers of education should implement bilingual education for deaf children. Deaf Australia works for an accessible society with no barriers where services and information are available in Auslan.
LEADERSHIP OF DEAF PEOPLE	Deaf Australia promotes the principle: "Nothing about us without us". Deaf Australia is committed to strengthening our capacity that will contribute to the autonomy, expertise and self-determination of deaf communities.
CO-OPERATION and PARTNERSHIP	Deaf Australia is committed to achieving our objectives through effective engagement with members, stakeholders, government agencies, donors and universities to successfully undertake its work.

Recent achievements

National Census 2021 –

Deaf Australia has successfully advocated with Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) to include language prompt in the next Census. The language prompt will ask if the person is using Auslan other than English and to write down 'Auslan' in the 'Other' option.

Auslan Curriculum (LOTE) –

Deaf Australia collaborated with the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in the development of Auslan Curriculum for years 1 – 10. Approximately 30,000 students from across Australia are currently learning Auslan as a language other than English (LOTE) subject.

Video Relay Service –

Deaf Australia collaborated with Department of Communications to establish Video Relay as part of the National Relay Service initiative. This could not be achieved without the support from Australian Communication Exchange (ACE) who has conducted trial Video Relay leading to the inclusion of the Video Relay in the National Relay Service.

Interpreters on TV –

Deaf Australia worked with broadcasters and collaborated with government agencies to ensure that interpreters are shown during the emergency and disaster announcements including the bushfire emergency in early 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic. Deaf Australia has developed guidelines which form part of the Government/ Interpreting Agency agreement on the deliverables.

Sign Symbol –

Deaf Australia has developed the sign symbol after consultation with the members of the Deaf community and presented the symbol to the World Federation of the Deaf to adopt the symbol as international symbol of sign languages.

Key Priority 1:

Auslan/ Indigenous Sign Languages – recognition and promotion

As many as 95% of deaf children are born into non-deaf families. Access to Auslan and the support for families of deaf children are of utmost importance in order to promote identity and wellbeing. Equally, the ability to access a range of programs with confidence, along with the capability to perform the roles as equitably as others, is also imperative.

To achieve this, Deaf Australia will focus on this priority to ensure that there are adequate resources, means and programs that will satisfactorily meet the expectation of deaf people of all age groups and from all cultural backgrounds.

To do this, Deaf Australia will undertake the following objectives:

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME
A. Raise awareness of deaf people and use of Auslan/Indigenous Sign Languages to wider communities.	Deaf community and the community-at-large are informed of, and about, deaf people and have good understanding of the value of the deaf community, its language and its culture.
B. Conduct National campaigns	Auslan/Indigenous Sign Languages are recognised in a formal context that protects the rights of deaf people to use it in the context of education, legal situations and health settings.
C. Improve Auslan workforce	Improved pathways and training for individuals to achieve their goals and to provide direct support for deaf people in the workplace.
D. Strengthen the use of Sign Symbol	The Sign Symbol is a trusted symbol of competency in Auslan across various disciplines.
E. Promote improved Research and Development (R&D) capacities	University and/or research institutions are taking an active role in undertaking independent research to demonstrate beneficial use of Auslan and Indigenous Sign Languages in various settings.

Key Priority 2:

Strengthen the Voice of Deaf Australians

Deaf Australia relies on members who are active in their local community to be 'the voice' of the deaf communities. Deaf Australia will collaborate with them and provide the necessary support, information and resources for them to be effective in representing not only their own experiences, but the deaf community as a whole.

To do this, Deaf Australia will:

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME
A. Prepare range of workshops, trainings or conferences	Deaf people are informed with new knowledge and strategies to advocate, improve or to undertake collective activities.
B. Develop accessible information resources	Improved access to information for members to make informed decisions and choices.
C. Collaborate with individuals or groups in the undertaking of activities that focus on improving access to information or services.	Individuals or groups are actively involved with development of activities, promotions and communication with the wider community to achieve intended outcomes.

Key Priority 3:

Enhance the capacity of service providers to effectively and efficiently meet the needs of deaf people

Deaf Australia recognise that to effect positive contribution from members of the Deaf Community, it is equally important that service providers are adequately informed and equipped to cater for the deaf individuals' needs when they seek their services. Providers who are well equipped are often the source of trusted service, however, many of these services are not what are actually needed by Deaf individuals.

Deaf Australia will work with a wide range of service providers, agencies and programs to increase their capacity to make themselves accessible. We will do this through sharing of knowledge, skills and strategies to meet a broad range needs for Deaf people, their families and/or carers, either directly or indirectly.

Where appropriate, Deaf Australia will work with relevant agencies and government at local, state/territory or national levels to:
- provide expert advice on a range of topics and issues,
- contribute to the development of policies,
- prepare and submit submissions, and
- represent the Deaf community in public and government sectors.

To do this, Deaf Australia will:

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME
A. Collaborate with providers, agencies and / or organisations to create accessible information and resources	Information and content are appropriately developed for deaf people to receive information and resources in an efficient and effective way.
B. Lead with relevant providers to develop 'best practice' approach to ensure that services are meeting the needs of deaf consumers.	Providers are armed with appropriate strategies and resources and undertake the implementation of these practices.
C. Advisory/representations	Providers, agencies and/or organisations are expertly advised by identified members of the deaf community to improve their programs, services and/or policies.
D. Prepare and submit submission, inquiries, discussion papers, and other consultative matters	Present issues and resolutions to a range of issues that will improve accessibility, support and policies for deaf consumers.

Key Priority 4:

Increasing the capacity of Deaf Australia

Under the Charities Act 2013 (Cth), Deaf Australia is a registered not-for-profit organisation and is an incorporated association (Inc) that operates in the interest of the members to genuinely carry out its objects and purposes and to respond to concerns raised by members of the Deaf Community. The members have a key responsibility in electing the Board of Directors who is a member of the Deaf Community.

The Board of Directors plays a key role in the governance of the organisation, ensuring that Deaf Australia's undertaking are meeting its goals and objectives, and they remain a primary and key national representative organisation for Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing people who use Auslan as their primary or preferred language.

The Board of Directors shall delegate operational management to the Chief Executive who then will manage the operational roles of the organisation in achieving the tasks set forward by the Directors.

To do this, Deaf Australia will:

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME
A. Maintain status of national representative organisation	Deaf Australia remains as a national peak representative organisation representing deaf and hard of hearing people whose use Auslan/ISL as a primary or preferred language, both nationally and internationally.
B. Memberships	Members are actively engaged through Deaf Australia's communications and engagement that will improve individuals' outcomes or as a collective group through system improvements, policy developments and partnership with other stakeholders.
C. Governance	Lead the organisation through discharge of its responsibilities in relation to strategic direction, policy approval, oversights and accountability such as the good governance of an ethical culture, good performance, effective control and legitimacy with members and stakeholders.
D. Auslan Shop	Selling Auslan/ISL authentic products to make profit for the purpose of sustainable future of Deaf Australia.
E. Organisational Sustainability	Deaf Australia remains capable and functional in the delivery of organisation's objectives and goals.

See Auslan videos

Scan the QR codes below to watch Auslan videos for each section of this roadmap.

Apple or Android devices: Switch to camera and point it at the QR code. You will be taken to the video automatically.

Introduction	Beliefs and Values	Priority 1
Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4