



# ONLINE SUMMIT

**Theme: Putting Auslan on the Agenda**

 **Date: 23 - 24 June 2026**

 **Time: 9.30am – 4pm AEST**

## *Day 1: Program Schedule*

**9.20AM - 9.30AM**

Joining the Summit

**9.30AM - 9.45AM**

Opening Remarks

**9.45AM - 11AM**

Presentation 1: Overview Systemic Advocacy Work by Deaf Australia, Deafness Forum Australia & DeafBlind Australia

**11AM - 11.10AM**

Short Break

**11.10AM - 12.10PM**

Presentation 2: NDIS Update by NDIA Representatives, Matthew Wright and Lawrence Price

**12.10PM - 12.40PM**

Lunch Break

**12.40PM - 1.55PM**

Panel Discussion 1: NDIS & Q&A

**1.55PM - 2PM**

Short Break

**2PM – 3PM**

Roundtable 1: NDIS

**3PM – 3.30PM**

Wrap up from the roundtable discussion

**3.30PM – 4PM**

Closing Remarks

*Please note: The program is subject to change.*

*Version: 22 June 2026*



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## *Day 2: Program Schedule*

**9.20AM - 9.30AM**

Joining the Summit

**9.30AM - 9.45AM**

Opening Remarks

**9.45AM - 10.45AM**

Presentation 3: Beyond Language Rights: Neurolinguistic Rights by Donovan Cresdee

**10.45AM - 11AM**

Short Break

**11AM - 12PM**

Presentation 4: Early Access to Language - The World is Colourful by Julia Murphy

**12PM - 12.30PM**

Lunch Break

**12.30PM - 1.30PM**

Roundtable 2: Language/Auslan

**1.30PM - 2.30PM**

In Conversation with Sandra Hoopmann: Navigating the Challenges of Aging

**2.30PM – 2.40PM**

Short Break

**2.40PM – 3.40PM**

Roundtable 3: Healthcare/Aging

**3.40PM – 4PM**

Wrap up and Closing Remarks

*Please note: The program is subject to change.*

*Version: 22 June 2026*



# **PRESENTERS / PANELLISTS DETAILS**

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## **PRESENTATION 1**

### **DRO OVERVIEW SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY WORK**

#### **DEAF AUSTRALIA**

Deaf Australia was founded in 1986 as a not-for-profit organisation that represents all Deaf, Deafblind, and hard of hearing people who use Auslan as a primary or preferred language.

#### **DEAFNESS FORUM AUSTRALIA**

Deafness Forum Australia represents one in six Australians who are deaf, hard of hearing, and/or living with chronic ear and ear-related balance disorders, and serves as the national voice for hearing health.

#### **DEAFBLIND AUSTRALIA**

Deafblind Australia is a not-for-profit, membership-based advocacy organisation and the peak national body representing people who are Deafblind.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION - PANELLISTS**

#### **PAUL BARLETT, COMMUNICATION EXTRA**

Paul Bartlett is Director and Principal Support Coordinator of Communication eXtra, an award-winning, nationally recognised NDIS provider supporting deaf and hard of hearing Australians. With over 30 years of senior leadership experience across Australia and the UK, he has led charities, private companies, disability organisations, and consulting businesses. He specialises in disability services, NDIS systems, governance, and organisational development, and has held roles including CEO of deafPLUS (London), General Manager of Signamic, and Planner with the NDIA. Paul currently serves on the boards of Deaf Children Australia and Deaf Victoria and is committed to advancing accessibility and inclusion.

#### **SHARON XABREGAS, SIGNHEAR**

Sharon Xabregas is a Deaf professional and Founder and Managing Director of Sign Hear, an NDIS-registered, Deaf-led organisation supporting Deaf and hard of hearing Australians. With over 20 years of experience, she specialises in inclusive employment, Auslan access, and systemic advocacy. Under her leadership, Sign Hear became the first Deaf-owned business awarded the national Inclusive Employment Australia contract in 2025. Sharon has also led innovative projects, including Australia's first Auslan children's learning series with Life Education. An award-winning leader, she serves on advisory boards promoting Deaf representation, equitable employment, leadership pathways, and accessible community spaces.



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## **PANEL DISCUSSION - PANELLISTS**

### **SUZANNE ROBERTSON, PODC**

Suzanne Robertson is President of Parents of Deaf Children, a NSW/ACT organisation that has supported families of Deaf/deaf children for more than 60 years. As the parent of a deaf young person, and as someone who lives with mild to moderate hearing loss following illness in 2023, Suzanne brings lived experience to her advocacy. She works alongside families navigating education, early intervention, NDIS processes, language access and systemic barriers. Through PODC, Suzanne advocates for stronger partnerships with families, Deaf community, services, schools and government, recognising access as the foundation for participation, connection and belonging.

### **CHELLE DESTEFANO**

Chelle Destefano is a Deaf person and artist based in Melbourne, Victoria. She began her arts studies and career in Adelaide, where she lived for 18 years. She has been exhibiting since 2012, with highlights including an international Arts Exchange in Berlin in 2017, where she collaborated with artists from diverse cultural backgrounds. Chelle also brings lived experience navigating the NDIS as a participant, which informs her perspective on accessibility and inclusion.



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## PRESENTATION 3

### BEYOND LANGUAGE RIGHTS: NEUROLINGUISTIC RIGHTS

*By Dr Donovan Cresdee*

Language rights have traditionally focused on communication access, education, interpreting services, and the recognition of sign languages. These achievements remain essential. However, emerging evidence from linguistics, neuroscience, psychology, and Deaf studies suggests that language is more than a communication tool - it is also a developmental necessity for the growing brain.

This presentation introduces the concept of Neurolinguistic Rights: the right of every child to receive accessible language during the critical developmental years in which the brain's language, cognitive, social, and reasoning systems are formed.

Building upon existing language-rights frameworks, the presentation explores how accessible language supports not only communication, but also learning, identity formation, social participation, wellbeing, and human flourishing. It argues that many challenges experienced by Deaf people are more closely associated with barriers to accessible language than with deafness itself.

## PRESENTATION 4

### EARLY ACCESS TO LANGUAGE - THE WORLD IS COLOURFUL

*By Julia Murphy*

Drawing on both her lived experience and her years working with young DHH children, Julia will explore why early access to language is essential and the critical window of learning opportunities in a child's early years. She will discuss the importance of families having access to all available options, support, and information so they can make informed decisions that give their child the best possible start in life.