

# **Building Spaces That Support Deaf Community**



An Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Toolkit

# About Deaf Australia

Deaf Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we work and pay our respects to Indigenous Elders past and present. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

We recognise the past atrocities against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this land and that Australia was founded on the genocide and dispossession of First Nations people. We acknowledge that colonial structures and policies remain in place today and recognise the ongoing struggles of First Nations people in dismantling those structures, especially Deaf, Deafblind, and hard of hearing First Nations peoples.

We also acknowledge and respect the members of the Deaf Community in Australia, who preserve our rich heritage, culture, and language Auslan. We acknowledge our Auslan teachers and educators, who work to promote awareness and equality for deaf signing peoples, and access through our sign language. We recognise the past challenges and oppressions, such as discrimination, ableism, audism, and linguicism our peoples in the Deaf community have experienced at any point of their lives and respect their resilience along with determination over the generations.

Deaf Australia was founded in 1986 as a not-for-profit organisation that represents all Deaf, Deafblind, and hard of hearing people, and others who are fluent and knowledgeable about Auslan. We aspire to achieve equity for Deaf people across all areas of life. The focus has and continues to be on developing access to information and accessible communication. We work with Australian governments and collaborate with key stakeholders to make sure that Australia complies with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The UN Convention and the National Disability Strategy guides our work.

Throughout this document and others inside the AIDE Toolkit, Deaf Australia uses 'deaf person/people/community' to refer to all d/Deaf, Deafblind, and hard of hearing people who use Auslan as their language of preference, unless otherwise stated.

# Acknowledgements & Copyright

With thanks to Department of Social Services, Deaf Australia able to obtain funding for an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC (Information, Linkages and Capacity)) activity in 2021. We choose to focus on creating an evidence-based Accessibility and Inclusion Toolkit that would be freely available to everyone online.

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# Introduction

Hello, thank you for downloading this AIDE (Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity) Toolkit and for aiming to make everything compatible for members of Deaf Community in Australia who use Auslan every day. At Deaf Australia, we work at every level of Australia – individuals to small businesses, corporations to governments – to create a compatible ecology of practices and strategies that dismantle the barriers and promotes systemic, sustainable, and measurable change that benefit all permanently.

While the world has become more conscious of the inequalities and injustices that exist in our everyday lives, there is minimal awareness of what changes are required for the members of deaf communities everywhere. As the Deaf-led peak body advocacy and information organisation representing culturally Deaf and hard of hearing people in Australia, we are hopeful that the rising focus on the promotion of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD) across Australia and world. However, despite all resources and trainings available, Deaf people in Australia still face common barriers and misconceptions every day in every aspect of their lives due to limited understanding on the needs and requirements of Auslan Deaf community.

Deaf Australia saw the need for a specialised Toolkit that provides information and guidelines on the pathways to make the settings and services compatible to Deaf people in Australia. With the funds (ILC grant from DSS) provided, it makes the possibility of having this Toolkit free and accessible with the hope of reaching as many people as possible in Australia to make the change for the better for everyone and making it more welcoming for Deaf people.

The choice of using AIDE as the term here with specific order is deliberate, for Deaf people the accessibility is the primary source of frustration, barrier, need, and issue everywhere every day. The contents of this Toolkit were derived from information gathered through Australia's first (and possibly world's first) Deaf-designed and Deaf-led evidence-based social and data research including the diversity of perspectives, intersectionality, and lived experiences of Deaf people between the age of 13 and 80 in Australia.

This Toolkit was created to support:

- The understanding on the needs and requirements of Deaf people.
- On sharing the awareness and supporting the wider community into including Deaf people in their settings and services.
- The implement of needed change that is compatible for Deaf people that is systemic, sustainable, and measurable which would benefit all.

This Toolkit focuses on four primary areas:

- Deaf community in Australia
- Education
- Employment
- Health

On the DA's website, there is information related to this Toolkit in both Auslan and English with the summary and snapshot of each area, including the guidelines, checklists, and resources to explore further.

We hope that the information and tips provided in this free Toolkit and the accessible resources from the website support you and your community/network/workplace to investigate the gaps, prepare through consultations, and implement the change needed to effectively include Deaf people in all aspects equally as the rest of the people in Australia, regardless of their backgrounds.

## Importance of the right type of inclusivity for deaf individuals

Inclusivity is a fundamental principle that ensures equal rights, opportunities, and participation for individuals of all abilities. For deaf individuals, inclusivity holds immense importance as it directly impacts their ability to thrive, succeed, and fully engage in various aspects of life. However, deaf individuals often face numerous barriers that hinder their access to education, employment, healthcare, and social interactions. These barriers can lead to isolation, limited opportunities, and unequal treatment.

Creating inclusive environments is essential to break down these barriers and provide equal opportunities for deaf individuals. Inclusive spaces not only embrace diversity but also value the unique contributions and perspectives

of deaf individuals. When deaf individuals are included and empowered, they can actively participate, contribute their talents and skills, and achieve their full potential. Inclusivity promotes a sense of belonging, boosts self-esteem, and fosters a more equitable society for all.

However, it is equally important to recognise that inclusivity goes beyond physical presence and requires effective communication and easy access to information. Deaf individuals rely on visual communication, particularly through Auslan (the main sign language used in Australia), to access and understand information. Ensuring effective communication is essential for creating inclusive spaces where deaf individuals can fully engage and express themselves. Additionally, easy access to information in various domains of life enables deaf individuals to make informed decisions, participate actively, and enjoy equal opportunities.

## Purpose of Deaf Australia's AIDE toolkit as package

Deaf Australia (DA) has noted that while the trend is towards making communities, workplaces, and education accept diversity and inclusion, it has not focused on what is identified as exclusion, especially for Deaf people in Australia. The broad assumption of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) movement includes all disabilities, perspectives, and intersectionality and offers generic adjustments and changes that are considered 'easy' to make.

We believe that in Australia, communities, organisations, and individuals should view Deaf and hard of hearing people as an expected part of human diversity and accommodate them accordingly. We believe this will result in an enabling environment that empowers them to participate in society to the same extent as people who are not deaf. Also, that all policies and practices should be culturally inclusive for everyone, including Deaf people.

Over the last 10 years, this area has become a main concern for DA as we have fielded so many complaints, questions, and requests for assistance regarding accessibility in the community, workplaces, health, and education. DA decided that this AIDE Toolkit would be a tool to extend the contents of the DEI, DIAP, DAIP, and other A&I toolkits, plans, and strategies, and

to guide on how to make it more compatible for Deaf people in their setting or service.

The ongoing prevalence of systemic and individualistic discrimination, general and social oppressions, and prejudice is currently unacceptable – especially in our community and in this country. Redressing those problematic barriers is important for us, and DA has taken the initiative to develop this AIDE Toolkit, along with the supporting resources, to aid (pun intended) the changes to improve that.

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide a comprehensive resource that educates, guides, and inspires individuals, organizations, and communities to foster inclusivity for deaf individuals. It serves as a practical guide for understanding the barriers faced by deaf individuals and offers strategies and solutions to promote Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (AIDE) in various contexts, mainly in education, employment, health, and social interactions.

The toolkit aims to raise awareness about the challenges and experiences of deaf individuals, dismantle stereotypes, and empower readers to take actionable steps towards creating accessible and inclusive spaces. It provides insights into the importance of effective communication, reasonable adjustments, and supportive policies and practices. By implementing the recommendations and strategies outlined in this toolkit, readers can make a positive impact on the lives of deaf individuals and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

## How to use the Toolkit

DA's AIDE Toolkit is an online resources site, accessible in both Auslan and English.

On the website, the Toolkit is provided with pathways that suits two groups – deaf and non-deaf (hearing) people where they would find a series of information, checklists, Auslan videos, and more. Those were designed to be printed for quick reference in a relevant area as needed.

# About Deaf community in Australia

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The Deaf community is a multifaceted group characterized by a rich tapestry of experiences, cultures, and identities. Central to the Deaf community is the shared language of Auslan, serving as a linchpin of Deaf culture and communication. Beyond language, a collective cultural identity is forged through shared experiences, values, and traditions, exemplifying the strong sense of community that binds its members.

Super diversity within the Deaf community embraces a wide array of cultural influences, contributing to a mosaic of unique identities. Multicultural backgrounds, including First Nations Peoples, play a pivotal role in shaping Deaf identities, giving rise to a multitude of practices and celebrations specific to areas. Additionally, linguistic diversity thrives, with variations in sign language dialects and a prevalence of multilingualism among Deaf individuals.

Intersectionality has a significant impact on deaf individuals as they navigate their identities within various social contexts. A deaf individual may experience discrimination, challenges, and privileges based on multiple aspects of their identity in addition to their deafness. These aspects could include race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and more.

For example, a deaf person who is also a person of colour may face compounded forms of discrimination and barriers. They may encounter challenges related to racism and ableism simultaneously, which can result in unique and complex experiences. Similarly, a deaf individual who identifies as LGBTQ+ may face additional layers of discrimination and prejudice related to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Additionally, intersectionality can influence access to resources and opportunities. For instance, a deaf individual from a lower socioeconomic background may face distinct challenges in terms of access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities compared to a deaf person from a more privileged economic background.

Understanding and addressing intersectionality is crucial for creating inclusive environments and policies that recognize and respect the diverse experiences of deaf individuals. It helps to ensure that support systems and accommodations fits with the various dimensions of their identities, ultimately promoting equity and inclusivity.

The values, protocols, and history of the Deaf community are deeply ingrained and serve as a foundation for its members. Values of resilience, empowerment, and a shared cultural identity permeate through the community, driving its progress and unity. Established protocols for communication, interactions, and community participation serve to maintain a cohesive and inclusive environment.

Additionally, the parental hearing status is one of the factors that impact on the development of the Deaf community. A noteworthy 95% of Deaf individuals in Australia have non-deaf parents, that could contribute to the instability of the community in long term, which brings in diverse perspectives and experiences, allowing for a continuous evolution of the community's culture and identity.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021 Census, there are over 16,000 Auslan users in Australia. However, the hearing status of these users remains uncertain. Deaf Australia believes this number may be an underestimate, and they hope that future censuses will provide more accurate data.

## FACTS

- **Auslan** (Australian Sign Language) is the primary sign language used by the Australian Deaf community, encompassing various dialects and variations.
- Auslan holds **official recognition as a community language** within Australia (Lo Bianco, 1987 and Dawkins, 1991).
- The Deaf community is composed of **diverse individuals**, including d/Deaf, Deafblind, hard of hearing individuals, as well as hearing family members. It also includes hearing individuals who rely on Auslan for communication, and professionals who actively work with the Deaf community, such as interpreters, teachers, support workers, and others.
- The population of deaf individuals within the Deaf community in Australia is estimated to be between **16,000 to 30,000**. This is within the number the health authorities have given relating to the national hearing health issue on having **1 in 6 Australians** with some form of hearing loss.

By acknowledging these facts, we gain a better understanding of the rich diversity and complexity within the Australian Deaf community.

## Understanding Deafness and Deaf Culture

Exploring the diversity within the deaf community is crucial. The deaf community is incredibly diverse, encompassing individuals with various abilities, talents, backgrounds, experiences, and communication preferences. It is important to recognise and celebrate this diversity to create truly inclusive spaces. For example, within the deaf community, individuals may use different communication methods, such as Auslan, speaking English or other spoken languages, or a combination of both. Some individuals may have been deaf since birth, while others may have become deaf later in life through illness or accident. Additionally, the deaf community mirrors the diversity of backgrounds in the wider Australian society – including First Nations peoples, LGBTIQ+, refugees, migrants, and more. Understanding this diversity helps break down stereotypes and allows for tailored approaches to inclusivity that work for deaf individuals in Australia.

Dispelling myths and misconceptions surrounding deafness is crucial as they can contribute to misunderstandings and barriers. One common misconception is that deaf individuals are unable to communicate effectively. Many deaf people are fluent in sign languages, such as Auslan, and possess

effective communication skills. Another misconception is that deaf individuals cannot perform high-skilled jobs effectively. In reality, there are numerous deaf individuals holding high-skilled jobs, such as lawyers, CEOs, and senior managers in various sectors.

Appreciating deaf culture and the identity of the Deaf community is equally important. It is rich and vibrant, with its own unique customs, norms, and traditions. It is crucial to respect deaf culture as a valuable distinct identity alongside other identities, such as First Nations, and others. For example, Auslan is not just a language but a cornerstone of deaf culture, representing shared experiences and a sense of community and belongingness among deaf individuals. Recognising and embracing deaf culture allows for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the contributions and perspectives of deaf individuals in various aspects of life.

In addition, raising awareness on the Deaf community and Auslan (Australian Sign Language) plays a vital role. It helps educate the wider community about the needs and strengths of deaf individuals. Furthermore, having deaf role models and ambassadors provides inspiration and demonstrates the potential and achievements of deaf individuals across various fields. Their stories serve as powerful examples of what is possible, breaking down barriers and inspiring others in the process.



# Barriers & Issues

Deaf individuals in Australia, like in many parts of the world, face a range of barriers and issues in their daily lives, varying in severity. AIDE's basic requirement is to ensure a service, product, environment, and device is available to be used by anyone at any time. However, for deaf people there are six main barriers to AIDE and those are: Attitudinal; Systemic & Policy; Environmental; Informational; Communication; and Technology.

The examples of these obstacles would include:

## 1. Communication Barriers:

- **Limited Access to Auslan Interpreters:** Availability of Auslan interpreters in various settings (e.g., healthcare, education) can be limited, especially in the regional and remote areas, hindering effective communication.
- **Lack of Captioning and Subtitling:** Inadequate provision of captions and subtitles in public spaces, on television, and online platforms restricts access to information and reduce safety.
- **Insufficient Auslan Sign Language Education:** Limited availability of quality Auslan education and resources for both Deaf individuals and the wider community can impact on the quality of communication and information exchanges.

## 2. Access to Information:

- **Inaccessible Websites and Media:** Many websites, videos, and online platforms do not provide adequate accessibility features, excluding Deaf and Deafblind individuals from valuable information.
- **Inconsistence on the use of Auslan in information exchanges:** There is no language policy to govern how Auslan should be delivered appropriately in various settings on information being shared to the Deaf community at any time.

## 3. Employment and Workplace Discrimination:

- **Lack of Accommodations:** Some workplaces may not provide necessary accommodations, such as Auslan interpreters, TTY devices, or visual alerts, making it difficult for Deaf individuals to perform their job effectively.
- **Stereotypes and Prejudice:** Negative assumptions about Deaf individuals' capabilities may lead to discrimination during hiring and promotion processes.

## 4. Education:

- **Limited Access to Quality Education:** Deaf students may face challenges in accessing quality education, including a lack of specialized teachers and inadequate resources for Auslan instruction.
- **Lack of Deaf professionals:** There is no supports for Deaf people to become professionals inside the Education system, thus deaf children missing out on role models and mentors.

## 5. Social Isolation:

- **Communication Barriers in Social Settings:** Difficulty in participating in conversations in noisy or fast-paced environments can lead to feelings of isolation.
- **Limited access to Auslan signers:** Challenges in finding enough Auslan users to interact when you're in regional or remote areas can increase the sense of isolation.
- **Lack of Auslan in home settings:** Limited interactions between deaf child/adult and their families can impact on their self-esteem and communication skills.



## 6. Healthcare Barriers:

- **Communication with Healthcare Providers:** Difficulties in communicating with healthcare professionals can lead to misunderstandings, misdiagnoses, and inadequate care.
- **Stereotypes and Prejudice:** Deaf people encountered issues when they attempt to obtain quality care and support from healthcare professionals due to their negative preconceptions.
- **Lack of Auslan interpreting services:** This is prevalent in the regional and remote areas which endangers deaf people's health and lives.

## 7. Legal System:

- **Limited Access to Legal Support:** Deaf individuals may encounter challenges in accessing legal services and understanding legal processes due to communication barriers.
- **Language or Disability:** The issue within the legal system is the categorisation of deaf people as either with disability, or as CALD, not both.

## 8. Transportation:

- **Lack of Communication Support:** Limited availability of sign language interpreters or accessible information in public transportation settings can pose significant challenges.
- **Discrimination and Prejudice:** The clash between the services and insurance policies place deaf people at risk of not being able to travel independently and safely.

## 9. Cultural Barriers:

- **Lack of Awareness and Sensitivity:** Limited awareness and understanding of Deaf culture and communication needs can lead to exclusion and misunderstanding.
- **Ethnicity, Language, and/or Disability:** Deaf people would have multi-identities and not all are at same level of acceptance or support.

## 10. Media Representation:

- **Underrepresentation:** Deaf individuals may not see themselves accurately represented in mainstream media, perpetuating misconceptions and stereotypes.
- **Misuse of Auslan:** When Auslan is presented by non-deaf people, it gets abused and degraded which then impact on how it is received by deaf people.

## 11. Ableism, Audism, and Linguicism:

- **Discrimination and Prejudice:** Deaf individuals may face discrimination based on their disability (ableism), their use of sign languages over spoken languages (audism), or their cultural & linguistic identity (linguicism).
- **Ignorance:** Deaf people have endured the ignorance from others on their needs every day in every aspect of their lives at any point of their lives which takes toll on their wellbeing in long term.

## 12. Technological Barriers:

- **Incompatible technological tools:** Some technologies may not have enough accommodations in place for deaf people which makes it challenging for them to participate fully with others. In some instances, the co-design did not happen appropriately, especially for Deafblind individuals.
- **Lack of options on alternatives:** Many platforms offer limited options for accessibility, such as captioning or transcripts which exclude deaf people from accessing to information.

It is important to recognize and address these barriers to create a more inclusive and accessible society for Deaf individuals in Australia. This includes implementing policies, providing resources, and fostering awareness to promote equal opportunities and participation. The AIDE Toolkit is one of the tools to support you and others on how to identify and improve.

# Overview of the AIDE framework and its relevance to deaf individuals

AIDE (Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity) is a model Deaf Australia believe is the best practice because it promotes a more inclusive, equitable, and diverse society for all individuals, including those with disabilities such as deaf people. Here are some reasons why AIDE is beneficial:



## 1. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES:

AIDE aims to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background, abilities, or characteristics, have equal opportunities to fully participate and thrive in society. It promotes the removal of barriers and the creation of inclusive environments that allow everyone to access education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services on an equal basis.



## 2. RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY:

AIDE recognizes and values the diversity of human experiences, identities, and abilities. It acknowledges that every individual has unique perspectives, strengths, and needs. By embracing diversity, AIDE encourages the celebration of diverse cultures, languages, and abilities, fostering a more inclusive and enriching society.



## 3. EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-DETERMINATION:

AIDE empowers individuals to exercise their rights, make choices, and have control over their lives. It encourages self-advocacy and self-determination, enabling individuals to actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This fosters a sense of autonomy, independence, and dignity.



## 4. SOCIAL COHESION AND UNDERSTANDING:

AIDE promotes social cohesion by fostering understanding, empathy, and respect among individuals from diverse backgrounds. It helps break down stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination, creating a more inclusive and cohesive society where everyone is valued and respected.



## 5. INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY:

AIDE recognizes that diversity and inclusion spur innovation, creativity, and problem-solving. By including individuals with diverse perspectives and experiences, AIDE encourages the development of innovative ideas, solutions, and approaches to address societal challenges.



## 6. ENHANCED WELL-BEING AND QUALITY OF LIFE:

AIDE contributes to the overall well-being and quality of life for all individuals. By ensuring equal access to education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services, AIDE supports individuals in realizing their full potential, achieving personal fulfillment, and leading meaningful lives.



## 7. LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK:

AIDE aligns with national and international legal frameworks and human rights principles that promote equality, non-discrimination, and the full participation of all individuals in society. It reinforces the rights of individuals with disabilities, including deaf individuals, and holds institutions and governments accountable for upholding these rights.



## 8. POSITIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT:

AIDE can have positive economic impacts by promoting diversity and inclusion in the workforce. When individuals with diverse backgrounds and abilities are included and given equal opportunities, they can contribute their unique talents and skills, leading to increased productivity, innovation, and economic growth.

By embracing AIDE principles, societies can create a more inclusive, equitable, and respectful environment where all individuals, including deaf people, can thrive and contribute to their fullest potential. It helps break down barriers, challenge discrimination, and build a society that values diversity and upholds the rights and dignity of all its members.

The AIDE framework is particularly relevant to deaf individuals as it addresses the specific challenges they may face in various aspects of life. By adopting the principles of AIDE, we can ensure that deaf individuals have equal access to education, employment, healthcare, and social interactions.

For example, the accessibility in education for deaf individuals involves providing appropriate accommodations, such as sign language interpreters or captioning services, to ensure effective communication in classrooms. Having spaces for groups of deaf students to learn, mingle, collaborate are also vital, although insufficient currently in Australia. Accessible learning materials and technologies also play a crucial role in promoting equal educational opportunities for deaf students.

Another example with equity in employment - Deaf individuals may face barriers in the workplace related to communication, advancement opportunities, or discriminatory practices. Equity in employment ensures that deaf individuals have equal access to job opportunities, reasonable accommodations, and career advancement, promoting a fair and inclusive work environment.

## AIDE Framework: Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity

The AIDE framework encompasses four core principles: Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity. These principles form the foundation for creating inclusive and safe spaces where all individuals, including deaf individuals, can fully participate and thrive.

Those principles are supported by 5 cornerstones:

**1. Awareness:** Attitudes can be a barrier to the concept of AIDE for us. We all are often unaware of our own attitudes. Related training and available resources can help to challenge and reduce biases.

Specialised Deafness Awareness training can help, not only to inform and educate but also to question perceptions and prejudices. Increased awareness of the nature, scope, and scale of the deafness as disability, discrimination, and inequality can usefully support our understanding. It also helps prepare us to think about disability from broad view, the barriers and issues that Deaf people deals with.

**2. Accessibility:** It is not only physical, but social and hidden disabilities that could prevent one from having full access to services, products, and settings. There are means to check type of access is needed and how it can be provided culturally appropriate, as well ensuring that the contribution of both parties is happening without any barriers.

**3. Adjustments:** To ensure a Deaf person is being provided for, the removal of physical and non-physical barriers and providing extra support are taken that is suitable to them. Sometimes, adjustments can be relatively simple, however there are times where the accessible equipment or technology is required, such as Auslan interpreters, hearing loops, or captions which could take up more preparation and planning.

It is essential to check with each Deaf person for the specific adjustments they would require to be able to participate without barriers and issues. Look up for latest list of adjustments from your HR or similar and assess what you have got

already and what needed to be updated/ upgraded. Another important note is to prepare ahead with having adjustments done – such as developing a community project that could involve Deaf people and include them at the start of the project.

**4. Inclusion:** The concept of inclusion can be quite different between the wider community and Deaf community. For Deaf people, inclusion means no barriers to communication and access to information – which means full language accessibility provided at all the time. In fact, this is not happening all the time for the Deaf community.

It also means no exclusion from their social and professional groups and that they are already part of the decision-making in every level that concerns both wider and Deaf communities. A regular involvement of Deaf people in any event/organisation/ company/network is important as we can bring in and enrich the collective skills, experiences, and perspectives to any group.

**5. Sustainability:** Since deafness affect people at any age, there is a need to make the approach sustainable for many years to every age groups. This is not just a finite project, but an on-going process that needs to track the positive and negative changes, potential and present barriers and issues, and evolving strategies and outcomes concerning members of Deaf community and their ability to participate in Australian society fully.

Sustainability could mean:

- **Long-term Planning:** Ensuring that AIDE initiatives are not short-term fixes but are integrated into long-term planning and strategies.
- **Ongoing Evaluation:** Regularly assessing the effectiveness of AIDE initiatives and making necessary adjustments based on feedback and changing needs.
- **Community Engagement:** Involving the Deaf community in the decision-making process from the start and seeking their input on policies and initiatives that impact them.
- **Advocacy and Policy Influence:** Working towards influencing policies and regulations at local, regional, and national levels to ensure sustained support for the Deaf community.



# Conclusion

In summary, the AIDE framework, consisting of Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, serves as a vital tool in addressing the unique challenges faced by deaf individuals across various aspects of life in Australia. By adopting these principles, we can pave the way for equal access to education, employment, healthcare, and social interactions.

## Key Takeaways

- 1. Education:** Providing appropriate accommodations, accessible learning materials, and conducive learning spaces are essential in ensuring equal educational opportunities for deaf students.
- 2. Employment:** Equity in employment guarantees deaf individuals access to job opportunities, reasonable accommodations, and a fair, inclusive work environment.
- 3. Awareness:** Challenging and reducing biases through specialized Deafness Awareness training helps foster a deeper understanding of the nature and scope of deafness as a disability.
- 4. Accessibility:** Recognizing that disabilities can be physical, social, or hidden is crucial in providing full access to services, products, and settings in a culturally appropriate manner.
- 5. Adjustments:** Customizing support and removing barriers, be they physical or non-physical, ensures that deaf individuals can participate fully without hindrance.
- 6. Inclusion:** For deaf individuals, inclusion means unhindered access to communication and information, as well as active involvement in social and professional groups and decision-making processes.
- 7. Sustainability:** Implementing AIDE initiatives requires long-term planning, ongoing evaluation, community engagement, and advocacy to ensure sustained support for the Deaf community.

## Call to Action

To create truly inclusive spaces for deaf individuals in Australia, Deaf Australia is calling you to proactively implement the AIDE framework. This involves:

- 1. Education:** Prioritize accessible education by providing necessary accommodations, resources, and spaces for deaf students to thrive.
- 2. Employment:** Advocate for equity in the workplace, ensuring equal opportunities, reasonable accommodations, and a fair work environment for deaf individuals.
- 3. Awareness:** Invest in specialized Deafness Awareness training to challenge biases and foster a deeper understanding of deafness and the barriers faced.
- 4. Accessibility:** Ensure accessibility across all aspects of life, recognizing that disabilities can take various forms and may require different accommodations.
- 5. Adjustments:** Consult with each deaf individual to determine specific adjustments needed to facilitate their full participation.
- 6. Inclusion:** Actively involve deaf individuals in decision-making processes and social/professional groups to enrich collective skills, experiences, and perspectives.
- 7. Sustainability:** Integrate AIDE initiatives into long-term planning, regularly evaluate their effectiveness, engage the Deaf community in decision-making, and advocate for policy changes at all levels of governance.

By committing to these actions, we can collectively work towards a more inclusive and equitable society for all, where deaf individuals have equal opportunities to thrive and contribute to the richness of our diverse communities.