



MEDIA RELEASE

Embargo – for release Wednesday 21 September

A Culturally Affirming Way Forward – new research into the impact of Sign Language on the Australian Economy

September, 2022. Deaf Australians could be \$12,000 per year better off if they are provided with adequate Auslan (Australian Sign Language) intervention, according to new research released today by Deaf Connect and Deaf Australia.

The research, titled '**Our Culture, Our Value, The Social and Economic Benefits of Auslan**' is the first of three ground-breaking reports into the economic impact of Auslan on the Australian economy produced by Per Capita and commissioned by Deaf Connect and Deaf Australia.

The release coincides with National Week of Deaf People (19-25 September 2022), and International Day of Sign Languages (Friday 23 September). The theme for National Week of Deaf People 2022 is *Building Inclusive Communities for All*.

Deaf Connect CEO Brett Casey says that the series of reports are the first of their kind in Australia to address the economic value, and optimal timing of Auslan intervention for Deaf Australians.

"To ignite policy debate, Deaf Connect identified the need for evidence-based research on the economic impact of Auslan access, but equally important, and pertinent to National Week of Deaf People is the individual and community benefits that shared language fluency can provide", Mr Casey says.

"This first report outlines the social value across four core areas; health literacy, educational attainment, labour market participation and wellbeing and health benefits.

"The report investigates the benefits associated with the redress of disability impacts that can be provided by Auslan acquisition and are agnostic of other redress solutions such as technology assistance.

"Across these core areas it is estimated the per capita benefit Deaf Australians of Auslan access is \$12,419 dollars annually. Critically, the flow on from this is a total economic value of \$368 million per year.

"We hope to see these figures, and the social value of sign language access considered by policy makers, including a government review of Auslan as a language, from a status, policy, funding, service provision and cultural lens."

Deaf Australia CEO, Jen Blyth said the report will be supported by further research, titled; *Exploring the Benefits of Auslan in Early Intervention Approaches for Deaf Children*.

"While, '*Our Culture, Our Value, The Social and Economic Benefits of Auslan*', establishes the value of Auslan for individuals and the economy, this subsequent paper focuses on how, and when that



learning is best implemented and the opportunity cost that even a few years can have on a child's capacity to learn.

“The final paper, “Establishing the Costs of Hearing Loss in Australia is as an investigation into the personal and economic costs associated with hearing loss particularly regarding its disabling effects and the cost of productivity. A clear understanding the costs associated with the status quo is critical for policy makers to plan for the future.”

In addition to this suite of research, Deaf Connect and Deaf Australia’s have developed a joint advocacy agenda, which will form the basis of our discussions with Government and other stakeholders. This includes four recommendations:

- A commitment from Government to establish a Joint Committee to review the equity, effectiveness, and efficiency of Auslan including existing policy, funded programs, services and overall status
- Redesigning the Employment Assistance Fund to ensure greater accessibility and flexibility, which will lead to greater employment participation and socioeconomic contributions by Deaf Australians
- Providing access to critical assistive technology for Deaf Australians aged over 65 who are ineligible for the NDIS
- An authentic commitment from all levels of Government to ensure all key press conferences, briefings and announcements are accessible in Auslan.

Deaf Australia and Deaf Connect look forward to presenting this, and the rest of our pipeline of research to Government and engaging with all stakeholders on these important issues.

*The report, ‘**Our Culture, Our Value, The Social and Economic Benefits of Auslan**’ can be found on the Deaf Connect and Deaf Australia websites, include a summary report and an Auslan version.*

The release of this research was planned for an exclusive event at Parliament House in Canberra on 14.09.22 which has been postponed to accommodate plans for the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

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Media Opportunities:

*For all media enquiries contact: Ian Harvey Ross, Head of Marketing and Sales
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*Deaf Connect offer interpreting services for Auslan representation across all media.
Interviews and comment are available from Mr Brett Casey, CEO Deaf Connect and Jen Blyth, CEO Deaf Australia.*

ABOUT DEAF CONNECT

Deaf Connect is the largest whole-of-life service provider and social impact organisation for Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing Australians. We stand with the Deaf community to build capacity and influence social change while paying respect to history, culture and language.

Our focus is on community and empowerment, supporting Deaf Australians and their families to make choices and actions to thrive in life, while delivering on a national agenda to improve equity



for the Deaf community, and to remove systemic cultural and language barriers.

We are the largest employer of Deaf and hard of hearing people in Australia, an registered provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme and an approved provider of in-home care for seniors. Deaf Connect is the country's largest Auslan interpreting agency, and provides training in sign language through our RTO (RTO Provider Number 41192).

For more information visit www.deafconnet.org.au.

ABOUT DEAF AUSTRALIA

Deaf Australia was founded in 1986 as a peak national advocacy body that represents all Deaf, Deafblind, and hard of hearing people and others who live in Australia and use Auslan as their language of preference. 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 CRPD and the Australian Disability Strategy guides our work; we aspire to achieve equity for Deaf people across all areas of life.

For more information visit [Home - Deaf Australia](#)

The Research

The Report: **'Our Culture, Our Value, The Social and Economic Benefits of Auslan'** is attached with this release, including a summary report.

Background:

The National Week of Deaf People (NWDP) is a week-long national celebration of Deaf individuals and the Australian Deaf community, which includes celebrating the International Week of Deaf People (IWDP) and International Day of Sign Languages (IDSL) which are initiatives of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). These two events are traditionally held during September and are based on the founding date of the WFD (23 September 1951). It is an opportunity for Deaf people to celebrate their communities, language, culture and history; make the public aware of their local, state and national Deaf communities; and to recognise their achievements.

It is also an opportunity for organisations involved with or wishing to be involved with the Deaf Community to build and maintain relationships with Deaf people and be recognised as an ally to the Deaf community.

What is Auslan?

Auslan or Australian Sign Language has been used in Australia since the 1900s, with evidence dating back to 1820s. Auslan can be tracked back to much older sign languages, such as Indigenous Sign Language which have been used for thousands of years, which follow Indigenous spoken languages and are culturally bound. Older sign languages that are connected to Auslan include British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language. The Auslan language is unique language owned by the Australian Deaf community.