



## Deaf youth worse off by \$120,000 without early intervention, new data reveals

**October, 2022.** Delaying early Auslan intervention by two years costs over \$120,000 over the lifetime of a Deaf child, according to new research commissioned by Deaf Connect and Deaf Australia.

This latest research is part of a suite of reports titled **A Culturally Affirming Way Forward** which includes three key papers:

- Our Culture, Our Value, The Social and Economic Benefits of Auslan (*released Wednesday 21 September – coinciding with National Week of Deaf People*)
- Exploring the Benefits of Auslan in Early Intervention Approaches for Deaf Children, and;
- Establishing the Costs of Hearing Loss in Australia.

Jen Blyth, CEO of Deaf Australia, and Brett Casey, CEO of Deaf Connect, cited the *Our Culture, Our Value* research during a witness address at the *Disability Royal Commission Public Hearing #29* on Monday, 24 October 2022.

"During the first day of the public hearing, we emphasised the value of culturally appropriate early intervention services for Deaf and hard-of-hearing children," Ms Blyth said.

"Culturally appropriate early intervention proactively offers support to deaf children and young people and aims to prevent adverse outcomes, such as language deprivation.

"Early intervention for a deaf child may involve exposure to Auslan, oral-aural skills, and access to Deaf culture and community. This access may alleviate and reduce the risk of adverse outcomes.

"97% of deaf children in Australia are born to hearing families, and it is critical that the importance of timely, culturally appropriate and well-rounded early intervention is shared with parents and that they are aware of the options available to their children.

"The **Exploring the Benefits of Auslan in Early Intervention Approaches for Deaf Children** research report highlights an ideal window for first language acquisition, during which language acquisition is strongest. The report outlines cognitive, developmental, social, educational, mental and physical health benefits from the timely intervention."

Deaf Connect CEO Brett Casey says that these benefits have real-world consequences for the future livelihood of Deaf Australians.

"The public hearing speculated what 'could have been' for deaf children had they been presented with early intervention strategies at the right time, but the data is clear in this regard", Mr Casey says.



“The opportunity cost for Australian children is quantified in the report through a conservative model suggesting lifetime cost of delaying early Auslan intervention from age five to age seven is \$128,245.

“The cost for an individual of delaying intervention from the first year of life rather than at the point of school commencement is between \$273,782 and \$367,445.

“Context for this financial impact is outlined in a further report released today **‘Establishing the Costs of Hearing Loss in Australia’** - an investigation into the personal and economic costs associated with hearing loss particularly regarding its disabling effects and productivity costs.

"Combining personal financial impact and the significant costs associated with economic productivity and quality of life, the overall cost of deafness in Australia is approximately \$1.784 billion per annum.

“As the Disability Royal Commission continues to address systemic issues impacting the Deaf community these macro perspectives must be considered – showing a measurable personal and economic impact that trickles down to all Australians.”

*The three key issues papers that make up ‘A Culturally Affirming Way Forward’ are available for download on the Deaf Connect and Deaf Australia websites, including summary reports available in English and Auslan.*

**END**

**Media Opportunities:**

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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.*

Further information on Public hearing 29: The experience of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, can be accessed [here](#).

**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, a 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.deafconnect.org.au](http://www.deafconnect.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 [www.deafaustralia.org.au](http://www.deafaustralia.org.au).