

## **INQUIRY INTO AUSLAN INTERPRETATION FOR BROADCASTING**

**Name:** Ms Darlene Thornton

**Date Received:** 5 August 2022

---

To whom it may concern:

## NSW inquiry into the broadcasting of Auslan interpreters in legislative council proceedings

My name is Darlene Thornton, and I am a Deaf NSW resident. Auslan is my first language (and has been for 3 generations in my family) and I use it to communicate in everyday life. I am a proud member of the Deaf community here in NSW. I would like to draw your attention to my submission into why the provision of Auslan interpreters in legislative council proceedings would be meeting Australia's commitment to the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly Article 9: *Accessibility* and 21: *Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information*. Auslan interpreters at legislative council proceedings should be the norm, not the exception.

Auslan is my natural and therefore preferred language. Auslan is not a language that represents English on the hands. It is a linguistically valid, rich, and complex language and one Deaf people use to make sense of the world, belong to a community, immerse into the culture, values, and mores of that community. Just like anyone else with any other spoken language. I have found that being able to access information using Auslan and Auslan interpreters is key to being able to make informed decisions and express myself clearly.

I have found that during the height of the COVID19 pandemic the use of Auslan interpreters at Gladys Berejiklian's press conferences really supported the ability to access information. I was able to understand what was happening, the number of cases and deaths, the mandates put in place and make decisions that were based on the ability to access that information.

English as a written format is challenging for me. It is my second language, and I am not as proficient in it as I am in Auslan. It is frustrating when I am told that captions are a form of access; they aren't. The captions do not always show exactly what the speaker said. The quality of captions can be bad, depending on which T.V. program you watch. Captions do not describe what is happening, such as the mood of the speaker or the tone the speaker uses. Captions are not a visual way to show what is happening. Captions make it difficult for me to make informed decisions because the lack of understanding of what is happening means that I need to search other avenues for clear and accessible information.

Providing Auslan interpreters at legislative council proceedings is an accessible way to acquire information and knowledge about law that may affect me; it is critical that this is automatically provided, not be a should-we-shouldn't-we process.

Having stated all that, I am very concerned about the critical shortage of Auslan interpreters in Australia, but especially in NSW. There is only 41 Certified Auslan interpreters who may be suitable to interpreting the legislative council proceedings due to skills set required. There are about 4,000 Deaf & Auslan using NSW residents (Census 2021) who requires Auslan interpreters every day (according to NAATI, there is, in total, 138 Auslan interpreters in NSW alone). This push on the demand for Auslan interpreters to high ever, thus there are many Deaf NSW residents having to manage without them every day.

I propose that for any inquiries, submissions, bids, and such that occurs in the legislative assembly which involves the Deaf community and their language – Auslan to be provided with Auslan interpreters to maintain full accessibility, inclusion, and transparency. At any other times, Auslan interpreters should be provided when a Deaf & Auslan user requested, while the captions to be provided at all the time. On side note, I suggest that captioning to be monitored regularly to ensure its up to right standards required.

I also propose that the NSW Parliament needs to investigate on accepting the submissions in Auslan and answer any queries in Auslan as well. All the relevant NSW Parliament materials and essential information to be provided in Auslan at all times for Deaf & Auslan using residents.

I am happy to be contacted to provide evidence at this hearing.

Thank you for reading this.

Yours Sincerely,

Darlene Thornton