

INQUIRY INTO AUSLAN INTERPRETATION FOR BROADCASTING

Name: Ms Shirley Liu

Date Received: 5 August 2022

Ms. Shirley Liu
Deaf Advocate

Email:

5 August 2022

Dear Mr. Mason-Cox and members of the inquiry,

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

I am writing this submission on my own initiative. I would like to take the opportunity of introducing myself; my name is Shirley and I'm a proud and passionate member of the Australian Deaf community. I communicate in my natural and preferred language which is Auslan. I work in community development with Deaf Australia and am the President, of the World Federation of the Deaf Youth Section, voluntary and non-profit organisation who is focus on advocacy for human rights for Deaf people.

I recently had the opportunity to visit our national parliament in Canberra to watch Senator David Pocock's speech. Senator Pocock as you may know made the news regarding the provision of an Auslan interpreter to interpret his speech into Auslan. He stated that having an Auslan interpreter in the studio rather than interpreting alongside him was and I quote: "...the difference between accessibility and inclusion. Today we have achieved the former but not the latter. In future I hope we can achieve both."

Mr. Mason-Cox and members of the inquiry, so do I. My experience at watching Senator Pocock's speech in person was good, although it would have been an optimal experience if there had been an Auslan interpreter next to Senator Pocock. Given that Australia is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities it is incumbent on the parliamentary systems across Australia to adhere particularly to:

Article 9 Accessibility:

Accessibility – 2e) to provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and professional sign language interpreters, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public.

Article 29 Participation in political and public life:

Participation in political and public life - b) to promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs

Auslan interpreters at legislative council proceedings should be the norm, not the exception.

Captions are not a form of accessibility; in fact, they place the burden of access onto the Deaf person because English is not a preferred or natural language. Captions do not show exactly what the speaker said. The quality of captions has declined in recent years and not all media platforms are willing to invest in improving this. Captions cannot describe what is happening, such as the mood of the speaker or the tone of the speaker. Captions are not a visual medium. In short, captions are a poor substitute for Auslan.

I, myself, follow all politics, discussions and related topics on social media platforms because of my voluntary roles. However, I don't take the opportunity to visit any legislative council proceedings or other NSW parliament sittings or the website because I know the captions are not enough or hard to follow. I much prefer Auslan interpreters for any important matters related to disability, social justice, accessibility, language and so on. This is a significant cause in the barrier of limited opportunities for deaf people who may wish to pursue political careers.

We need to also consider and apply this accessibility lens to other areas, not only legislative councils' proceedings: in premiers' press conferences, elections, emergency updates and other all public forms of life where other citizens can access information through radio or other spoken mediums. It is not providing equality or even equity for deaf people who face this barrier every day.

For my views for this inquiry, yes, it is important to have Auslan interpreters at legislative councils' proceedings – I strongly recommend the NSW parliament to hold consultations with NSW Deaf community members over the accessibility options, other areas where they should be provided an Auslan interpreter.

It would be nice to have a team of interpreters, Deaf interpreters and Deaf professionals at the NSW parliament and NSW governments who can provide some advice on best practice for broadcasting such as to put an interpreter on the screen (1/3) Not only that, there is a need to have some Auslan version in most important resources available provided by the government.

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 people in NSW.

I am happy to give evidence at a hearing upon request.

Thank you for your time to read this.

Kind regards,

Shirley Liu

More supporting resource links:

<https://ilareporter.org.au/2020/10/on-an-equal-basis-with-others-deaf-community-access-to-emergency-broadcasting-through-bushfires-and-a-pandemic-part-i-advocating-for-access-shirley-liu/>

<https://ilareporter.org.au/2020/10/on-an-equal-basis-with-others-deaf-community-access-to-emergency-broadcasting-through-bushfires-and-a-pandemic-part-ii-the-crpd-and-access-to-information-stephanie-triefus/>

<https://wfdeaf.org/news/3-important-key-points-how-do-your-country-make-sure-all-deaf-people-are-updated-on-the-latest-news/>

<https://www.ifes.org/news/encouraging-deaf-communities-participate-political-processes>

<https://rm.coe.int/168093e08f>

<https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/parliamentary-business/in-committees/committees/eci/inquiry-into-access-to-services-and-information-in-auslan#tab2009657-2id>