



ARTS ACCESS VICTORIA



GET THE FACTS: AUSLAN

Auslan is the Australian sign language for people who are Deaf. Many people who have been Deaf from birth regard Auslan as their first language. Some adults who become Deaf later in life choose Auslan as their first language. Auslan is accepted by the Federal Government as a community language, “with a distinct sub-culture, recognised by shared history, social life and sense of identity.”

AUSLAN INTERPRETER SERVICES

The engagement of Auslan interpreters by the Victorian arts sector—for example at events, festivals, theatre and stage productions and exhibitions—is slowly increasing, however people who have Auslan as their first language remain a largely untapped audience.

One in six Australians have hearing loss and Auslan users enjoy participating in the arts with family and friends. Touring productions are hugely popular—for example, the Auslan performance of the musical *King Kong* in Melbourne attracted 80 Deaf audience members and friends. As a result, a second interpreted performance was held.

Auslan interpreter services provide equal access to arts and entertainment for people who are Deaf, their friends and families. They fulfil an organisation’s obligations to Australia’s anti-discrimination laws.

Smartphone applications have been developed to provide Auslan signing for performance events, film, TV and art exhibitions. There is a smartphone application available to provide Auslan interpreting. Other technology is developing. (See the links on page 4 for more information.)

Budget for access

It is vital to include access services in your budget from the start. Include the cost of access services (Auslan interpreters) in all funding applications.

“Paula [the Auslan interpreter] was awesome at Hannah Gadsby. It has been a long time since I have seen the Deaf community laugh in unison with the hearing audience. Perfect timing, expression and perfect sign selection. A true professional...she could have her own stage.

Brilliance personified!

Tamina Kelly

Interpreting for theatre

To arrange an Auslan interpreted performance:

- Set a date for the Auslan performance, usually once or twice in a season.
- Book the interpreters as early as possible.
- Seek interpreters who have specialised theatre interpreting skills (see **Useful Links**).
- Two interpreters are usually required.
- Allow for interpreters to attend rehearsals or early performances to familiarise themselves with the show.
- Provide interpreters with scripts and DVDs of the show/event in advance, if possible.
- If you are planning a public social event after the show, book interpreters to interpret social chatting and networking.
- Consult with the specialist theatre interpreters or Deaf advisors on the best location for the interpreters to allow optimum viewing by audience members who are Deaf ('sight lines').
- Reserve seating that allows a clear view of the interpreter, and include the Auslan reserved seating in your booking process.
- Telephone booking is difficult for people who are deaf. Online booking, if clear and user friendly, is preferred. Ticketmaster set up online booking for Auslan reserved seats for King Kong. To complete the process see the steps below in **Common steps in providing Deaf access to events**.

Interpreting for seminars, lectures and forums

- Book well in advance of the event with the interpreter agency (a month is desirable).
- Give the interpreter as much information about the event as possible—for example, a transcript of the speech or lecture to be interpreted, a list of discussion topics.
- Allow for interpreters to stay for any drinks, supper or discussion after the event, so that people who are Deaf can take part fully.
- Two interpreters are usually required.
- Seek advice from interpreters or Deaf advisors on the best position to provide a good view of the interpreter, and the lighting levels required.

Common steps in providing Deaf access to events

- Raise the awareness of front-of-house, information and enquiry staff about Deaf access and communication, to promote universal customer service.
- Provide an email address where Deaf people can make enquiries.
- Publicise events through regular channels and to Deaf, Deaf arts and disability arts organisations.
- Online platforms such as Facebook and other social media are popular with the Deaf community.
- Advertise Auslan interpreted events on your website and in printed promotions. A small Auslan signed online video giving the information is ideal.
- Add interpreted events to your Access page on your website.
- Display the international Auslan symbol in all publicity so people see at a glance if there are interpreter services.
- Give the names of Interpreters in community-specific promotions. Deaf community members often like to know the names of the Interpreters engaged.

When I look through a program or website, I'm looking for performances and events that are accessible for me. As there are hundreds of events, I won't read through all of the listings to look for a mention of Auslan interpretation. Having the access symbols tells me at a glance whether an event is accessible or not.

Mija Gwyn

Interpreters for Individuals

You may need to book interpreters for meetings or workshops with people who are Deaf, or for job interviews, classes and workshops, etc.

- Engage interpreters as early as possible (a month is ideal).
- Two interpreters are usually required.
- Brief interpreters with any information they may need.
- The person requiring the service may have preferred interpreter or require an interpreter trained to a certain level, so check with them before booking.
- Consult with the person who is Deaf about their preferred position in relation to seeing the interpreter (across a table, beside a speaker, etc).
- When conversations take place, speak one at a time, do not speak across or interrupt the Deaf person or others involved.
- Always look at the person who is Deaf, not the interpreter.

Some useful links

- Auslan Stage Left specialises in Auslan Interpreting for theatre.
<http://www.auslanstageleft.com.au/>
- Auslan Services is a booking agency for Auslan Interpreters, not a theatre specialist.
<http://www.auslanservices.com/booking.html>
- VicDeaf is a peak organisation for people who are Deaf. They offer an interpreter booking service.
www.vicdeaf.com.au
- Arts Access Victoria is Australia's founding and most experienced arts and disability organization. They publicise and advocate for Auslan interpreted events.
<http://artsaccess.com.au/about/about-aav/>
- The Kennedy Center in Washington D.C, USA offers an extensive program of interpreted arts events.
<http://www.kennedy-center.org/accessibility/services/hearing.html>
- Media Access Australia has information about Auslan smartphone applications.
<http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/search/node/Auslan>
- Opera Australia: This clip shows the use of shadow interpreting, where interpreters are characters in the performance.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=612VCv6RqtY>
- Accessible Theatre (UK). Advice on use of interpreters and their positioning.
<http://www.accessibletheatre.org.uk/access-co-ordinators/british-sign-language>

Image: Deaf guide, Luke King giving a tour of the Andy Warhol and Ai Weiwei exhibition, NGV 2016. Photo by Mija Gwyn.

CONTACT AAV FOR MORE INFO



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