Get the Facts: Auslan

Auslan is the Australian sign language for Deaf people. Auslan is accepted by the Federal Government as a community language, “with a distinct culture, recognised by shared history, social life and sense of identity.” Many Deaf people see themselves not as disabled, but as part of their own distinct culture and language group.

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.

“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. Brilliance personified!”

– Tamina Kelly

Download Get the Facts: Auslan to find out how you can provide equal access to Deaf audiences.

# 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. Auslan users enjoy participating in the arts with family and friends as audience and individually as artists. However, in the past they have often been excluded from full participation by lack of access.

Auslan Interpreter services provide equal access to arts and entertainment for people who are Deaf, their friends and families. This access service delivers compliance with Australia’s anti-discrimination and human rights laws.

[Smartphone Auslan applications](https://accessiblecommunications.wordpress.com/2013/01/09/smart-auslan-a-users-experience/) are available for use at live performances and similar events.

“When I look through a program or website, I’m looking for performances and events that are accessible for me. I won’t read through all of the listings to look Auslan Interpreted shows. Seeing the access symbols tells me instantly whether an event is accessible or not.”

– Mija Gwyn

# How to arrange an Auslan Interpreted event

* Budget for Auslan Interpreters from the planning stage.
* Offer an Auslan Interpreted show/exhibition tour at least once in a season.
* Book interpreters as early as possible. A month or more is desirable.
* Seek interpreters who have theatre interpreting skills.
* Two interpreters are usually required.
* Allow interpreters to attend rehearsals or early performances as preparation.
* Provide interpreters with scripts and DVDs of the show/event in advance, if possible.
* Book interpreters for public after show events to allow Deaf people to take part.
* Check with a Deaf consultant or the Interpreter on the best location for interpreters.
* Reserve seating that allows a clear view of the interpreter.
* Include the reserved seating in your booking process.
* Online booking is preferred by Deaf people.
* Ensure Front of House and enquiry staff are well informed about Deaf access.
* Provide an email address and/or SMS number for enquiries.
* Publicise events through regular channels and also to Deaf, Deaf arts and disability arts organisations.
* Promote Auslan events through social media.
* A short Auslan information video on your website is welcoming for Deaf people.
* Display the Auslan symbol in all publicity to inform Deaf people at a glance.
* Give the names of interpreters where possible.

# Interpreters for Individuals

* You may need to book interpreters for meetings or workshops with people who are Deaf, or for job interviews, auditions, rehearsals, 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 interpreters or interpreter level. Check with them before booking.
* Ask the Deaf person about their preferred position in relation to the interpreter.
* In discussion, speak one at a time, do not interrupt the Deaf person or the interpreter.
* Raise your hand as a visual signal when you wish to speak.

Always look at the Deaf person, not the Interpreter.

# Useful links

## Auslan services

[Auslan Stage Left](http://www.auslanstageleft.com.au/) specialise in Auslan Interpreting for theatre. They also advise on event set-up and advertise Auslan events on their website.

[Auslan Services](http://www.auslanservices.com/booking.html) is a booking agency for Auslan Interpreters, not a theatre specialist.

## Venues and companies offering regular Auslan.

The [National Gallery of Victoria](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/plan-your-visit/access/#information-for-visitors-who-are-blind-or-have-low-vision)

[Malthouse Theatre](https://www.malthousetheatre.com.au/your-visit/access/)

[The Melbourne Theatre Company](https://www.mtc.com.au/your-visit/access/)

[The Wheeler Centre](https://www.wheelercentre.com/about-us/accessibility)

## Other useful links

[Expression Australia](http://www.expression.com.au/) (previously called VicDeaf)

[Opera Australia](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=612VCv6RqtY): This clip shows the use of shadow interpreting, where interpreters are characters in the performance and the reactions of Deaf audience members.

[Choose Art](https://chooseart.com.au/become-a-promoter/) — You can advertise captioned events on this accessible arts directory