



**Suzanne Orr MLA**

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs  
Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water  
Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services  
Minister for Seniors and Veterans

Member for Yerrabi

**RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Questions on Notice Paper No 1**

**6 December 2024**

**Question No. 38**

**Laura Nuttall MLA:** To ask the Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services

1. How many people in the ACT are trained in Auslan.
2. How many people in the ACT identify as Deaf or hard of hearing.
3. What ACT Government programs provide support to people wanting to learn Auslan.
4. What ACT Government and public service settings/events/workspaces include Auslan interpretation.
5. Is Auslan interpretation a requirement for any of these settings/events/workspaces.

**Suzanne Orr MLA** - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. There is a well recognised shortage of trained Auslan interpreters and translators available to support and assist people in the Canberra community. Not all people who are trained in Auslan are necessarily registered, making it difficult to determine how many people in the ACT are trained in Auslan.

In terms of available data, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) is the national standards and certifying authority for translators and interpreters. Currently there are nil certified Auslan interpreters or translators in the ACT listed on NAATI's online directory (<https://www.naati.com.au/online-directory/>). Additionally, there are no NAATI endorsed Auslan training and qualification providers in the

ACT.

Additionally, as at 1 November 2024, Deaf ACT advised there were two Certificate III Auslan interpreters available in the ACT. Certificate III Auslan enables people to communicate in Auslan as an independent user.

Within the ACTPS, the ACT Education Directorate employs four FTE Communication Support Assistants trained in Auslan with a minimum Certificate IV in Auslan and four FTE Itinerant Teachers – Hearing (including one native user). Certificate IV provides signing skills to communicate in Auslan with a degree of fluency and spontaneity across a wide range of subjects.

Under the ACT Disability Strategy, the Community Services Directorate is currently recruiting an Auslan speaker to support and strengthen CSD and ACT Government public communications and engagement.

2. There is a lack of ACT and national data available to adequately capture the number of Deaf and hard of hearing people in the ACT.

In July 2024, a media report indicated there are up to 400 deaf people who use Auslan in the ACT (<https://canberradaily.com.au/deaf-community-needs-to-be-heard/>). This is significantly more than the 244 people in the ACT recorded in the 2021 Census as having Auslan as a first language.

Nationally, according to the Hearing Care Industry Association (<https://www.connecthearing.com.au/about-connect-hearing/ews/facts-figures-hearing-loss-australia/>) one in six Australians currently suffer from hearing loss. This number is expected to rise to one in four by 2050, thanks to an ageing population and an increasing amount of people being exposed to dangerously loud noise. The average age of people with hearing loss who access hearing services via the Commonwealth Government is 79. This is concerning considering that half the Australians with hearing loss are younger than 65.

3. The Skilled Capital 2024-25 program allocated subsidised training places in:
  - PSP20218 - Certificate II in Auslan
  - PSP30218 - Certificate III in Auslan
  - PSP40818 - Certificate IV in Auslan
  - PSP50922 - Diploma of Interpreting
  - PSP51018 - Diploma of Auslan

Uncapped subsidised training is also available under the ACT Australian Apprenticeships (User Choice) program for trainees in the Diploma of Interpreting.

4. ACT Public Service (ACTPS) staff who require an Auslan interpreter are provided this reasonable adjustment under the ACTPS Reasonable Adjustment policy throughout all stages of employment.

Auslan interpretation is provided to students in ACT public schools who rely on Auslan to access the curriculum. Currently, Auslan interpretation is provided for five ACT public school students and one Teacher of the Deaf who is provided with Auslan interpretation in the workplace, such as at team meetings and professional learning activities.

ACT Government Directorates engage Auslan interpreters for a broad range of public engagement activities and events including:

- annual award events such as the ACT Training Awards and the ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards;
  - press conferences and public safety announcements by the ACT Emergency Services Agency and the Chief Health Officer;
  - to patients and consumers upon request in all Canberra Health Services health care settings;
  - consultation forums such as Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Forums and round table discussions; and
  - information sessions for grant application processes.
5. The ACT Government is required to provide Auslan interpretation upon request as a reasonable adjustment in the workplace, at events and in public service settings such as interviews, meetings and presentations. This is consistent with responding to other identified accessibility needs.

From April 2024, consistent with the *ACT Discrimination Act*, ACT Directorates and agencies must take steps to comply with the positive duty to provide reasonable adjustments to accommodate a person's particular needs arising from their disability.

Canberra Health Services is required to provide an Auslan interpreter for those who need it to ensure effective communication with consumers in the health setting and utilises a prioritisation approach in relation to urgency of care and availability of interpreters.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Minister for ~~Minster~~ for Disability, Carers and Community Services  
Suzanne Orr MLA

Date: 29/01/25

This response required 2hrs 30mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$212.30.