

The Auslan Teachers' Association of Victoria

The Auslan Teachers' Association of Victoria (ATAV) is a not-for-profit incorporated association. ATAV encourages the provision of high quality inservice programs for teachers of Auslan, to ensure the development and maintenance of their language proficiency and teaching skills.

Auslan, the language of the Deaf community in Australia, is an acronym for Australian Sign Language. Auslan is the primary or preferred language of the majority of Deaf people who have been profoundly deaf since birth or early childhood. It is also the native language of deaf children born to deaf parents who use Auslan.

Auslan plays an important role in the transition of cultural identify. Signing deaf people constitute a language group with a distinct sub-culture, sharing a history, a social life and a sense of identify united and symbolized by fluency in Auslan.

Although the name was coined by Trevor Johnston, author of the first Auslan dictionary in the early 1980s, the language itself, is much older. It has evolved from the sign languages brought to Australia during the nineteenth century from Britain and Ireland. It is a natural language that has developed over time and continues to do so, guided by usage and frequency. It has its own grammar and lexicon which is not based on spoken English.

It was recognised by the Australian government as “a community language other than English” in policy statements in 1987 and 1991. It has been taught as a language in Victorian schools since 1994.

Learning Auslan provides students with a unique means of understanding the diverse society in which they live and enables them to recognise and appreciate the significance of Auslan in the linguistic landscape of Australia.