



Auslan After Dark - 'Hearing Community' Community Action Plan 2024-2025

Relationships Australia
TASMANIA



SUPPORTED BY


Tasmanian
Government

Where can I get support?

Talking and reading about mental health and suicide can be distressing and may bring up strong feelings or personal experiences for some people. If you're worried about how you're feeling and need help, please use the below services to access support.

Need Support?

We are here for you...



! Is this an emergency?

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger - CALL triple zero (000)

Lifeline

Anyone having a personal crisis

 13 11 14

 lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service

Anyone thinking about suicide

 1300 659 467

 suicidecallbackservice.org.au

A Tasmanian Lifeline

Tasmanians supporting Tasmanians

 1800 984 434

 atasmanianlifeline.com.au

Beyond Blue

Support around depression and anxiety

 1300 224 636

 beyondblue.org.au

Find Help Tas

Directory of Tasmanian supports

 findhelptas.org.au

SANE

Support around complex mental health

 1800 187 263

 sane.org.au



Bereavement Support

StandBy Support After Suicide

 1300 727 247

 standbysupport.com.au

Alcohol & Drug Support

Holyoake (Hobart)

 03 6224 1777

 holyoake.com.au

First Nations Support


13YARN

 13 92 76

 13yarn.org.au

LGBTQIA+ Support


Qlife

 1800 184 527

 qlife.org.au

Youth Support

Kids Helpline

 1800 551 800

 kidshelpline.com.au

Men's Support

Mensline

 1300 78 99 78

 mensline.org.au

Financial Advice

National Debt Helpline

 1800 007 007

 ndh.org.au

Veterans Support

Open Arms

 1800 011 046

 openarms.gov.au

Gambling Support

Gambling Help Online

 1800 858 858

 gamblinghelponline.org.au



What is a CAP?

A Community Action Plan (CAP) is a community owned and led plan that focusses on promoting wellbeing, mental health, and suicide prevention. CAPs are developed in collaboration with the community to ensure that actions are as practical and sustainable as possible, focusing on the specific needs of each target group. CAP actions typically support one or more of the following domains:

- Stigma reduction,
- Connection to community,
- Awareness of supports available,
- Suicide prevention preparedness, and
- Suicide prevention prioritisation.

The Tasmanian Government has funded Relationships Australia Tasmania to provide support for communities to develop initiatives which align with the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy (2023-2027). This initiative provides communities with a small grant to support the role out of the action/s.

Background Information

Auslan After Dark is the story of two friends who have united their combined passions for community, advocacy, and fun to create a small business that bridges the gap between hearing and Deaf communities. With Auslan After Dark, Michelle and Ben strive to empower more hearing Tasmanians to communicate with Deaf people by fostering learning, language, and meaningful connection.

Michelle is a strong Deaf person and dedicated tutor, guiding people on their journey to learn Auslan with a special focus on families with Deaf children. By introducing Auslan at an early age, she helps to create stronger bonds between Deaf children and their families, whilst also connecting them to the wider community.

Ben is a CODA (Child of Deaf Adult) and has been signing since birth. Growing up, he started interpreting for his mother at a young age and Auslan has always been an integral part of his life. These days, Ben contributes his talents as a skilled Auslan interpreter, a dedicated high school teacher, and a talented stand-up comedian.



Community consultation method and results

In consultation with the Auslan After Dark team on 14 January 2025, Michelle shared that she was among the select few who participated in the groundbreaking Claremont Project in her youth, which had a significant and positive impact on her social and emotional wellbeing. She recalls her class being the final cohort to benefit from the Project, reflecting on the lasting bonds they formed, and remaining in touch with those friends to this day.

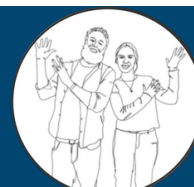
The Claremont Project — Started in 1991 as a collaborative effort aiming to improve services and opportunities for the Deaf community in Tasmania. The Claremont School in Hobart was designed to address the social and educational needs of Deaf Tasmanians and focused on providing resources, support, and opportunities to connect with the wider community. One of its key objectives was to bridge the gap between the Deaf and hearing communities, offering both groups a chance to learn from one another and create more inclusive environments (2).

The Claremont Project ended in 1994 due to changes in government funding and priorities. The project was initially supported by a grant from the Tasmanian Government, but as funding structures shifted and other services and programs began to address similar needs, the project was phased out. Despite its conclusion, the Claremont Project had a lasting impact by raising awareness about the needs of the Deaf community and the importance of access to services, education, and cultural understanding.

Michelle is living proof of the success of this program and the framework for inclusive learning environments that champion cultural integration and bi-lingual language models. Auslan After Dark is a community-led and organised initiative that creates similar opportunities, building a bridge that connects the hearing and Deaf communities.

References:

1. Little Tasmanian. (n.d.). Michelle Czyzowicz: Bridging the gap between the Deaf and hearing communities. Little Tasmanian. Retrieved January 29, 2025, from <https://littletasmanian.com.au/stories/michelle-czyzowicz>.
2. Auslan Storybooks. (n.d.). Deaf education in Tasmania. Auslan Storybooks. Retrieved January 29, 2025, from <http://www.auslanstorybooks.com/deaf-education-in-tasmania.html>.



Bridging the gap between hearing and Deaf communities is essential for fostering inclusivity, understanding, and mutual respect. In an interview with the 'Little Tasmanian' in November 2024, Co-Founder Michelle Czyzowicz says:

“Unfortunately, I can’t learn to hear -- that will never happen. But hearing people can learn to sign. I know Auslan plus English, so I’m trying to meet hearing people halfway. I’m always adjusting myself to the hearing world.” (1).

Learning a new language is not just about acquiring new words or grammar—it’s about embracing an entirely new culture. When learning a new language like Auslan, we’re not only gaining the ability to communicate in a different way, but also opening ourselves up to understanding the values, traditions, and experiences of a community. This deeper understanding fosters empathy, challenges assumptions, and creates more inclusive spaces for everyone.

“It doesn’t matter where you go in Australia, you’re part of the community. It doesn’t matter what age you are; everyone mixes together and we can all chat.

-Michelle Czyzowicz

“Anyone can do it; it comes naturally. You communicate with your whole body, not just your mouth. It’s facial expressions, body movements... If everyone starts signing, everything is more inclusive.

- Ben Richardson



Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities: A priority population

The Deaf community are continually and implicitly asked to navigate a society built on the needs of the hearing world — from communication, education, and access to services which can result in disparities across equitable healthcare, social inclusion, and overall quality of life.

By learning Auslan, hearing people can open the door to meaningful connections and help to create an environment where Deaf people are not isolated or marginalised due to a lack of accessible communication. It's not just about making it easier for Deaf people to communicate; it's about fostering inclusion, equality, and mutual respect. Taking the initiative to learn Auslan shows a commitment to ensuring that the Deaf community has the same opportunities to engage, access services, and contribute to society as everyone else. In learning Auslan, you're not just acquiring a new language—you're actively contributing to a more inclusive society where communication barriers are broken down, and everyone's experiences can be heard.

Auslan After Dark is having a transformative impact on the Tasmanian community by providing one of the only opportunities in the State to learn Auslan in a face-to-face setting. By offering events and courses that are specifically designed to be engaging and approachable, they are empowering hearing individuals to connect with the Deaf community in meaningful ways. This initiative not only provides essential skills but also fosters a culture of understanding and respect, ensuring that Deaf individuals are less likely to experience social isolation or miscommunication. The pioneering approach of Auslan After Dark is a reminder that inclusivity comes from a willingness to learn, understand, and connect. The continued efforts of Michelle and Ben at Auslan After Dark are working toward a future where every Tasmanian has a voice and place in society, reducing social isolation and supporting community connectivity.



Community Action Plan

Action 1: Organise Auslan trivia nights open to everyone in the community

<p>What will this action look like? (Activities)</p>	<p>Plan and host ongoing events where attendees can learn Auslan through trivia questions and interaction with the Deaf community.</p> <p>Covering the costs of venue hire, snacks, and prizes to create an accessible and welcoming atmosphere for participants.</p>
<p>How will this action make a difference? (Outcomes)</p>	<p>These events create a meaningful opportunity for attendees to learn Auslan, fostering greater inclusion and understanding between the hearing and Deaf communities.</p> <p>Cross-cultural sharing can reduce feelings of social isolation, improve mental well-being, and promote a sense of belonging for everyone involved.</p>
<p>How will you know if the CAP has made a difference (Outcome Measures)</p>	<p>Feedback from participants can be collected using surveys or included in the trivia questions as a fun way to gather attendees' perceptions on how the event has impacted their understanding of Auslan, their feelings of connection with the Deaf community, and any changes in their sense of belonging or social inclusion.</p>



Community Action Plan

Action 2: Build brand awareness and promotion for upcoming events

<p>What will this action look like? (Activities)</p>	<p>Ongoing promotion of upcoming Auslan trivia nights advertised at stand-up comedy performances after direct engagement with audiences through laughter and sign language.</p> <p>Also, leveraging social media platforms by sharing engaging content like student testimonials, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and event teasers.</p>
<p>How will this action make a difference? (Outcomes)</p>	<p>This blend of humour and learning fosters a relaxed environment, encouraging emotional well-being and openness to learning more about Auslan and the Deaf community.</p> <p>Increasing social media presence can encourage potential learners to ask questions, share experiences, and strengthen feelings of belonging and community.</p>
<p>How will you know if the CAP has made a difference (Outcome Measures)</p>	<p>Social media engagement metrics (likes, shares, and comments) can be tracked in line with events, as well as a growth in followers over time.</p> <p>Qualitative feedback from participants in personal stories/testimonials can also provide deeper insights into how the Auslan After Dark community has impacted their knowledge, mental health, and sense of belonging,</p>



Community Action Plan

Action 3: Partnerships with similar organisations to build capacity for advocacy

<p>What will this action look like? (Activities)</p>	<p>Collaboration with other Deaf and disability advocacy groups to launch awareness campaigns on issues like Auslan accessibility, education, and employment rights.</p> <p>Petitions, media outreach, and social media campaigns aimed at raising public consciousness and influencing policy change.</p>
<p>How will this action make a difference? (Outcomes)</p>	<p>Building cross-community alliances will create a more unified approach to tackling issues that impact multiple marginalised groups, allowing for greater collective power to push for systemic change in the areas of suicide prevention and mental health.</p> <p>Solidarity promotes a sense of shared purpose and mutual support, strengthening the community as a whole.</p>
<p>How will you know if the CAP has made a difference (Outcome Measures)</p>	<p>Assessing any changes in local or national policies or increased support for mental health initiatives for the Deaf community that emerge as a result of these cross-community alliances. Successful advocacy could be reflected in new mental health programs, funding, or legislative support.</p>



