

A Bill for an Act relating to Implementing a Mandatory LOTE Auslan Subject in Victorian Schools.

To be enacted by the YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament;

Implementing a Mandatory LOTE Auslan Subject in Victorian Schools Bill 2021

A Bill for an Act to establish a LOTE Auslan curriculum to be delivered in all Victorian schools and to be mandatory from Foundation to Year 10 level. Auslan instruction offers many benefits to staff and students in schools across Victoria. Learning Auslan is a valuable tool for improving the barriers in communication between Deaf and hearing people. Providing young people with Auslan education is a valuable opportunity to connect Deaf and hearing communities and is an important step towards a more just and accessible society. Ultimately this Bill aims to foster a more accessible and inclusive community.

Beyond making communication more accessible for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people, the LOTE Auslan curriculum described in this Bill will also foster more awareness and respect in hearing students and staff. It will highlight and seek to improve barriers in accessibility by promoting inclusivity and connection. By developing a holistic curriculum that centers the experience and knowledge of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people, including a focus on Deaf culture and history as well as language, this Bill also aims to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Deaf community. Incorporating Auslan into the curriculum has benefits for both Deaf and hearing children. Auslan has already been acknowledged for its ability to enhance educational and personal development, improve memory retention and motion processing, and to stimulate brain development and mental flexibility. Implementing it in schools can make communication more enjoyable and inclusive for all Victorians.

PART I—Preliminary

Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this Act are—

- (a) to ensure that all deaf and hard of hearing people are able to communicate effectively in public;
- (b) to spread awareness about Auslan, Deaf history and culture, ensuring greater understanding and appreciation of Auslan as a language;
- (c) to broaden access to learning Auslan to all Victorian schools.

Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence upon receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill, we define the following to mean—

- (a) **Auslan** means Australian Sign Language;
- (b) **DAT** means Deaf Awareness Training;
- (c) **LOTE** means Languages Other Than English;
- (d) **student** means a person between the ages 4-19 that attends a public, independent or private school within Victoria;
- (e) **VCAA** means Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority;
- (f) **The Department** means the Department of Education and Training, Victoria.

Part II—Establishment

Clause 4 Establishing LOTE Auslan as a mandatory subject in Victorian schools

- 4.1 It shall be mandatory for all Government, private and independent Victorian schools to deliver the Foundation to Year 10 LOTE Auslan Curriculum—
- (a) This subject shall be a compulsory requirement for all students from Foundation to Year 10.
 - (b) In Years 11 and 12, a VCE and VET LOTE Auslan elective subject shall be offered at all government, independent and private schools.

Clause 5 Developing the Mandatory LOTE Auslan subject curriculum

- 5.1 The Victorian Curriculum LOTE Auslan subjects, from foundation to year 10, shall be revised by the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA) in consultation with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community and linguistics experts.
- (a) The curriculum shall be reviewed annually by a panel consisting of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people.
- 5.2 The revised LOTE Auslan curriculum shall include—
- (a) an acknowledgement of national Deaf and Hard of Hearing celebrations including but not limited to—
 - (i) National Week of Deaf People;
 - (ii) Auslan Day;
 - (iii) International Day of Sign Languages;
 - (b) The Department shall fund attendance to schools by members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community at a minimum of once per week via face-to-face or online learning to promote Auslan;
 - (c) Deaf Awareness Training (DAT) delivered once per term by a relevant not-for-profit organisation as funded and deemed appropriate by the VCAA.
- 5.3 The Visiting Teachers program shall be made available to all schools for additional support upon the implementation of the new curriculum.
- 5.4 All Government, independent and private schools shall follow the revised curriculum and course content and deliver a LOTE Auslan subject that is appropriate to each respective year level.
- 5.5 It shall be up to each individual school to source appropriate Auslan teachers, with support from VCAA and the Department.

Clause 6 Minimum requirements for the delivery of the mandatory LOTE Auslan subject in schools.

- 6.1 From Foundation to Year 10, there shall be a minimum requirement of 100 minutes per week for the LOTE Auslan subject during school terms.
- 6.2 This subject shall be taught in a face-to-face classroom setting.
- (a) Students will have the option of learning online only if they are unable to access face-to-face classes.
 - (b) Supplementary classes shall be made available by the Department of Education and Training if students wish to pursue extension work.

Clause 7 Program to incentivise Auslan teachers

- 7.1 Relevant TAFE and university courses relating to teaching LOTE Auslan shall be incentivised for prospective teachers.
- (a) all TAFE courses related to the teaching of LOTE Auslan shall be added to the Free TAFE for Priority Courses Program;
 - (b) all university courses related to the teaching of LOTE Auslan shall be subsidised at a rate of 50% by the Department.

Clause 8 Deaf awareness training for teachers

- 8.1 All registered Victorian teachers shall be required to participate in DAT.
- 8.2 Teachers shall be required to participate in DAT refresher training every six months while registered.
- 8.3 All tertiary teaching courses shall include DAT as a mandatory module.