



## Unprecedented Research Launched with support from The Leonie Jackson Memorial Fund in Partnership with ASLITA

**5 February 2024.** Deaf Connect's Leonie Jackson Memorial Fund has awarded \$127,000 to the Australian Sign Language Interpreters and Translators Association (ASLITA) to fund ground-breaking research into the experience of deaf students and Auslan-English Interpreters in education.

This 18-month research project is the first of its kind in examining the interpreting support deaf students receive in Primary and Secondary Education across Australia. This research will shed light on the central experiences of Deaf students, conduct a national workforce survey, examine current international research and produce a comprehensive report with a view to advocate for systemic change and educational reform.

The grant will come from the Leonie Jackson Memorial Fund, which is a program created to honour the memory of former The Deaf Society CEO, Deaf Connect Executive and industry leader, Leonie Jackson. The fund supports projects that ensure access to quality bilingual education outcomes for all deaf children, regardless of their language preferences.

Deaf Connect CEO Brett Casey said that this project will have the power to drastically improve learning outcomes and support available to students and interpreters across the country.

"This is a unique opportunity to utilise the experience provided by deaf students to shape a strategy which can unite the Deaf community with Government, interpreters and teachers alike", Mr Casey says.

"One of the core findings from the Disability Royal Commission was that mainstream schools are not resourced to provide an adequate level of interpreting services in the classroom. This can have severe repercussions on the development of students, as they lack the support needed to acquire necessary language skills during formative years.

"Through the findings of the study, we can examine the level of training and certification among educational interpreters, to gain a better understanding of the current state of the workforce in Australia.

"It is crucial that we understand the barriers and opportunities for our interpreter workforce to ensure we're delivering the best possible learning environment to students in the classroom and whether more Government support is required to further the educational outcomes.

"Beyond learning outcomes for Deaf children, enhancing language acquisition also has a direct economic correlation. Research by Deaf Connect and Deaf Australia in 2022 found that the lifetime opportunity cost of delaying early Auslan intervention by two years is up to 3.3 years of median income – and these opportunities start in the classroom.



Belinda Roberts, ASLITA President and Certified NAATI Interpreter stated that this study will provide the Education Departments, schools and families with a more informed perspective on the standard of mediated education.

“Conducting academic research that highlights the experience of deaf students and the prevailing reality of employment, education, and training for educational interpreters will provide critical data to support change in how interpreting support is provided in schools.” Mrs Roberts says.

“Supported by Deakin University as our research partner and Deaf Australia as our principal stakeholder, ASLITA is excited to lead this research opportunity, provided by the Leonie Jackson Memorial Fund.

“The research and final report from this project will provide critical data to better understand the educational experience of Deaf students. With this research, ASLITA will:

- Share the information with state and federal Government Departments, NAATI and key training bodies
- Promote the key learnings to families with Deaf children, their schools and the learning professionals that work with them
- Advocate for change based on the findings”

The Leonie Jackson Memorial Fund is committed to carrying out Leonie’s legacy; to ensure that all deaf children are connected to and supported by the community. In education, a Deaf child’s village comprises of Deaf language models, Deaf teachers, signing parents and family members, and a range of people fluent in Auslan.

Deaf Connect and ASLITA hope to see this project act as a roadmap for the Deaf education sector and Deaf organisations to ensure equitable access to mediated education for all future deaf students.

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**Media Opportunities:**

For all Deaf Connect & Leonie Jackson Memorial Fund media enquiries contact:  
Ian Harvey Ross, Head of Marketing and Sales  
0407 180 710 or [ian.harveyross@deafconnect.org.au](mailto:ian.harveyross@deafconnect.org.au)

Deaf Connect offer interpreting services for Auslan representation across all media. Interviews and comment are available from Mr Brett Casey, CEO of Deaf Connect and Belinda Roberts, President of ASLITA



### **ABOUT DEAF CONNECT**

Deaf Connect is the largest whole-of-life service provider and social impact organisation for Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing Australians. We stand with the Deaf community to build capacity and influence social change while paying respect to history, culture and language.

We are the largest employer of Deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Australia, a registered provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme and an approved provider of in-home care for seniors. Deaf Connect is the country's largest Auslan interpreting agency and provides training in sign language through our RTO (RTO Provider Number 41192).

### **ABOUT ASLITA**

The Australian Sign Language Interpreter and Translators Association (ASLITA) is a not-for-profit body and is the national peak organisation representing the interests of Auslan/English Interpreters, Deaf Interpreters and Auslan Translators in Australia. ASLITA's object is to ensure best practice by promoting and educating practitioners and advancing supportive working conditions.

ASLITA's research partner in this project is Deakin University.

### **ABOUT THE LEONIE JACKSON MEMORIAL FUND**

In honour of her passion, and in memory of our friend and colleague Leonie Jackson, Deaf Connect launched The Leonie Jackson Memorial Fund for Bilingual Deaf Education early in 2021. The fund is Deaf Connect's commitment to projects that will ensure access to quality bilingual education for all deaf children, regardless of their language preferences. It was established to provide funding support for projects which reflect Leonie's ideals and build on her legacy. The Leonie Jackson Memorial Fund (LJMF) will provide one-off funding with a minimum of \$5,000 to support projects that promote bilingual Deaf education for children